

TO LISTEN OUT FOR

“We know that the ‘other voice’ filters through the holes that the vigilance of attention leaves unattended, but – where does it come from, and why does it leave us as suddenly as it comes?”¹

“Artistic activity makes the artist aware that he [sic] is not the author of his [sic] works ... in the case of the artist, efficient causality is at the service of a summons penetrating it through and through. It is subjected to mysterious voices, mysterious because not comparable with the voice heard in normal collaboration. It is consumed by calls that curve the very rectilinearity of its propulsion.”²

“The Muse

All that I am hangs by a thread tonight
As I wait for her whom no one can command.
Whatever I cherish most – youth, freedom, glory –
Fades before her who bears the flute in her hand.

And look! she comes ... she tosses back her veil,
Staring me down, serene and pitiless.
‘Are you the one’, I ask, ‘whom Dante heard dictate
the lines of his *Inferno*?’ She answers: ‘Yes’.”³

‘Inspiration is indeed that: the chance, the time of an expiration in which every word would be breathed to you before being given to you.’⁴

Something persistent draws the would-be-artist into substituting art for life. Life’s flow is interrupted, and diverted into making something under art’s aegis, a making that makes toward art. Prior to the interruption the maker had only been involved with art, however intensely, from life’s point of view; art and its things had been accommodated to life’s needs and desires into which the textures of the culture’s aesthetics had always already stitched themselves. The effect of the interruption is to invert this relation – art-making abandons life and tries to make its place other. Making-toward-art and in art’s name withdraws the maker from quotidian attachments, from everydayness, and, in this process, dissolves the very place from which the maker leaps with such committed certainty, hope and trepidation into art. Glancing back, the maker can no longer see a firm foundation, nor up ahead is there even a hint of a resting place, a place of safety.

Driven Toward and by Art

But what is responsible for the interruption, what effects life’s subordination to art in this hazardous leap, what provokes this conversion of living into arting?

Something is driving the maker into absolutely specific activities whose hoped-for destination, being outside the everyday knowledges sustaining life, is both unfixable and

¹ O. Paz, ‘The Bow and the Lyre’, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1973, p. 156.

² E. Levinas, ‘Proper Names’, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1996, p. 140.

³ Anna Akhmatova, ‘Poems of Anna Akhmatova’, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1973, p. 79.

⁴ Maurice Blanchot, ‘The Step Not Beyond’, trans. L.Nelson, State University of New York, New York, 1992, p.135.

without ‘identity’ (though we feel we ‘know’ it when we see, hear, touch, it...). This unspeakable drive – a paradoxical combination of attractive pull and forceful push - is the forcing that is pointed to in the culture’s loose conventions for placing art-making activities: ‘creativity’ and ‘the creative’, ‘imagination’, and ‘inspiration’. Often these terms will be elaborated through selective resort to ideas and concepts drawn from the bio-psycho-social sciences, and philosophical and critical discourses. However, makers themselves, for whom the entire point of the drive is something other than an ‘object of knowledge’, have no interest in explaining (away?) either the made thing or the process of making in terms outside themselves. The drive constitutes a searching and outcomes (‘things’...) that suspend, decline, explanation on behalf of another way of becoming, another kind of relation to others, to things, to world. Being, for makers, its own justification (‘art in art is art as art’, as Ad Reinhardt put it⁵), the driven fall into making is pointed to in terms which both preserve their embodied particularity for each maker while affiliating this to art’s transcendent demand, its demand to aim beyond, toward the elsewhere-other.

Inspiration, specifically the relation between air and a breathing being, and the drive to art are typically pointed to through some kind of reference to a call and a calling. Being-called or -summoned articulates making as a response to a ‘voice’ whose reverberations (not yet, or not necessarily, speech) cannot be refused, and it is offered as a movement that follows, or perhaps seeks, to find the seductive source of its own being-sounded-out. For makers this calling-drive-beyond-sense is its own sufficient unreasonable reason precisely because the call is to something way outside the self (and certainly culture, and possibly art as so far recognised). In whatever way the summoning reverberates through the self, its felt (embodied) point is the movement-beyond in subordination to whatever art seems to require of it. To refer to the calling and its sourcing (through terms such as ‘muse’ for example) is already to have acknowledged that making’s debt (only possibly redeemable subsequently in the thing as pledge) is to art’s utter unreasonableness. This call, as the maker’s calling, is what each seeks to attend to, to listen out for. But the one, the maker, only attends to it in the company of, buoyed up and along by, a feeling for that essential illimitable ‘vague’ – art - which he or she takes to be the potential destination site for whatever gest emerges from the response to the call. Response is thus animated, breathed through, by a sense of responsibility, not however for the self but for art. In this self-suspension the would-be-maker seeks to enter the anonymity of art. In other words the drive entails a doubling up in which the self puts itself, almost, out of action in order to do what art seems to require of it.

There is, then something like a call, an interruptive summons that splits the surfaces of reception allowing the maker to slip away out of living. Perhaps it is this split to which Joyce is pointing via “pious Eneas” writing, “when the call comes”, over “every square inch of...his own body” in the “continuous present tense” thereby “reflecting from his own individual person life unlivable, transaccidentated through the slow fires of consciousness into a dividual chaos, perilous, potent, common to allflesh, human only, mortal...”.⁶ For Joyce, this chaos, opened up by the split where ‘I’ becomes several, is common to all of us. Somehow the maker is summoned into making and out of the seeming surface continuity of selfing, by something insistent that, whatever its tones (it may be faint, loud, persistent, brief, hectoring, peremptory, hesitant, gentle, seductive, or none, all, some, of these, or entirely otherwise than any of them...) will not brook refusal. It effects a traction, a dragging, that disposes of life by extracting the maker from its requirements and withdrawing her/him to an elsewhere

⁵ Ad Reinhardt, ‘Art as Art’, Viking Press, New York, 1975, p. 63.

⁶ James Joyce, ‘Finnegans Wake’, Faber and Faber, London, 1975, pp. 185-6.

where the only requirement is to dedicate attention to art's needs (not, of course, that we 'know' how making's attention is constituted or what, precisely, art's needs might be, though it is the bet of 'Art's Plight's' texts that the only task art sets each maker is to hazard a leap towards that desert region perceived as art's dwelling...).⁷ But, because this elsewhere is the ineffable outside of life, it is an unsharable zone of non-relation: there is no language from which to derive guides, let alone rules, for response, for establishing what art might 'be', might 'need', or how to make for its outside.

Drawn into this obscure privacy of the outside, this non-common, an estrangeing solitude peculiar to arting, the maker is left only with the remnants, the echoes of the provoking call and the incommensurable baggage of everyday life, flotsam accompanying the maker irrespective of intention or hope. It seems, then, that the summons' challenge is to make something out of these little nothings, to fill this absent open, this tiny rift in life. And all that making can bring to the remnant is the belief that sustained its fall out of the relative securities of everyday knowledge (commonsense). Its moves are sustained only by its commitment to come up with something for art. This is what holds and directs making's attention as it tries to stay with the call's remains. Making becomes an unframable amalgam of attention, inattention, and intention, borne along through driftings in and out of these in which attempts to fix the call's offerings and draw them through both the insuppressible flotsam of everyday life and the maker's dialogue with art's things perform a chaos trajectory. Riftings, re-turnings, circling-spirallings, hesitancies, accelerations, rejections, suspensions, leaps, concentrations, reveries, repetitions, (and so on and on) deprive the trajectory (a para-purposeful drift-away) of any sense of linearity.

Drawn out, off and away, yet still Proximate

Whatever the possible 'coherence' of the thing(s) that emerges from the trajectory, the latter is not some constructable 'whole'. Nor are the matters that end up in the made-thing (be they colours, sounds, words, movements, objects or whatever) documents of some 'inner' identity sedimented down below the disjointings from which the thing emerged. They are traceable back to no one, to no earthed moments, manifestations only of a distancing without distance. Perhaps this is what Tsvetaeva was offering in her opening lines to 'The Poet':

'A poet's speech begins a great way off.
A poet is carried far away by speech.'⁸

This 'far away' bespeaks, perhaps, the call's necessary interruption of the everyday, its disjunctive break with 'meaning'. In a very different context, the parting of lovers in 'Poem of the End', Tsvetaeva draws us into the play of the word 'separation', simultaneously withdrawing it from language:

'*Separation* – in what language is it,
when the meaning itself doesn't exist?'⁹

Transferring 'separation' to the movement of making itself can point us to the binds that have to be undone, released, for making to get under way. Becoming separate while remaining absolutely proximate (to everything that 'is') points too to the 'truly immense journey'

⁷ Maurice Blanchot's extraordinary text '*Celui qui ne m'accompagnait pas*' (quirkily translated by Lydia Davis as 'the one who was standing apart from me', Station Hill, Barrytown, 1993) explores the strangeness of the demand to respond to the call as it opens onto what 'to write' might entail. The strangeness of the demand and response may be extended to making across all the contemporary arts. I consider aspects of making's transfiguring response to the demand through the term 'transliteration' in 'To Gest'.

⁸ Maria Tsvetaeva, 'Selected Poems', Carcanet, Manchester, 1999, p.50.

⁹ Op. cit., p. 86.

awaiting Kafka's horseman (as surrogate maker) in setting off for his 'destination' – 'Away-From-Here'.¹⁰

Perhaps, then, the maker, in and as the course of the making, becomes a moving opening, a site planing away within and across which irreconcilable tensions arise at the conjunctions between disparate and seemingly sourceless sendings. Being sourceless we cannot say that the sendings 'come' from 'within' (from some pre-existing internal container or chamber); but nor do they issue from some identifiable 'without', though many of their 'materials' may be already familiar and socially sharable. Making is, then, more of a drifting vicinity where unattributables are brought into one-off conjunctions ('just this once') which we attribute after the event and in the end almost by default, to a single authorial source – 'the author' – who may be prepared to accept responsibility in spite of having had no authority for it. For the intention to make cannot embrace the particulars which defined, this once, making's unmarkable path. For, in what the Mexican poet Octavio Paz calls 'this strange collaboration',¹¹ something like an 'alien will' erupts that, being 'anterior to every intellectual operation', bears 'scarcely any relation with the phenomenon called will.'¹² A commitment to make entails precisely the abandonment of intention in a giving up of willing at critical but always unpredictable moments of its trajectory.

Spiration

Turning Heidegger's 'Being' (as the production of 'man' and 'language' ensconced as 'the same' in a singular dwelling that forgets – excludes – the mother's gift of life, nurture, and air) back through itself in a lyrical questioning, Irigaray finds the poet 'Exiling himself from any willing suited to an existing community.'¹³ Echoing Heidegger's reading of certain poets as 'more daring by a breath', but hearing this as entailing a venturing beyond any constraints, any frame of a 'One' (man) caught within the language of Being, she proposes the poet-as-prophet drawn out by the attraction 'which moves them outside all borders'.¹⁴ This out-drawing, the ex-traction of the writer-hearer from culture, is the response to a summons: 'Call to enter a willing that wills nothing and gives up all resistance.'¹⁵ The force (Elle...Love) that 'is not to be refused, that gives itself unconditionally...profuses itself, with no safeguard.' The poets, these 'daring ones', drawn out of culture ('the tribunal of a generalised calculation'), are 'willing to will no more' and '(U)nveloped by anything built according to their self-willing.' The attraction, the hoped-for destination, is the 'source from which they receive themselves.'¹⁶

Nature, their maternal gift of living, the flowing exchanges of unbroken reciprocity of gestation, and the flows of ignored unmentioned air surrounding, perfusing, and sustaining every construct of Being, are both the source and the aim of the venture. Risking their breath, they entrust 'to the other the very *rhythm* of their breathing. Welcoming the loss of the measure of their breathing so as to discover for it a new range.'¹⁷ Expiry and inspiry are intertwined in a venturing where 'the only guide is to call out to the other'¹⁸ and where

¹⁰ Franz Kafka, 'Parables and Paradoxes', Schocken, New York, 1971, p. 189.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 141.

¹² Op. cit., p. 142.

¹³ Luce Irigaray, 'The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger', University of Texas, Austin, 1999, p. 172.

¹⁴ Op. cit., p. 175.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁶ All quotes in this passage drawn from op. cit., pp. 174-175.

¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁸ Ibid.

sources are breathed ‘that mean to say nothing – that are just the inspiration that will strike the other with feelings and thoughts overspilling these sounds.’¹⁹

As Irigaray’s questing dialogue takes on Heidegger’s discourse on the relation between poetry, language and Being, it is perhaps inevitable that language and poetry should appear to be privileged ‘media’ for access to this other, this loving sourcing. But it would be a mistake to raise one art over any other as ways of opening us to the other sourcings so effectively consigned to almost nothing in Heidegger’s framing of language as the House of Being. Indeed it may well be that, given the degradation of everyday language (the ‘it’, the ‘there is’ of commonsense) under technoscience’s management of representation, poetising in verbal language now faces near intractable difficulties in becoming the medium for that excised other. Whatever the medium or media, whatever senses comprise its planing out of culture, where the making sees its task as the turn back through and out of itself to its sourcing before reason’s shaping work and on art’s behalf, openness to the other stands a chance of coming back with unnamable somethings, offerings in advance of systems of exchange and reductive valuing. Yet it is very difficult to maintain a vision of imagination which clings for dear life to the possibility of art as a planing towards the open, in a culture where the resources of ‘the imagination’ are treated as a standing reserve for the endless development of the calculative project. So ‘efficient’ (as well as devastating...) has technoscience become at resource exploitation that the practical continuous reconstitution and co-optation of ‘the imagination’ is now intrinsic to its practical self-development. In this re-fashioning, the pledge of art-as-other is marginalised as a minor irritant to the culture machine’s appropriation of the arts as comforting hybrids of entertainment.

The conventions we have learned to use to ‘understand’ the arts’ makings of something-from-nothing cluster around an unboundaryable sense of ‘creativity’. They seem to source, loosely, the urge to make in a supposed creative ‘faculty’ of the imagination. Signifiers without signifieds, these terms have no locatable referents. The sourcing is attributed to indefinable accepting-shaping processes which themselves are enabled by the most fundamental life-processes of breathing and flowing. In whatever way we approach ‘creativity’, the pulsing alternations of spiration in all its modes (in-, re-, su-, a-, con-, ex-...) are its vital accompanists and sustainers.

Inspiration, drawing breath, refers us to that life-maintaining process (rhythm) which, if art is to have a chance of following the breath, withdraws and disperses the ‘one’ and substitutes a cloud of others that are no more than potential reverberations. The refreshing, stimulating, nourishing, expanding intake has sucked in, brought along, others unbeknownst in its train. It is always accompanied by as yet unacquainted disparates, enabling every sense separately and together to throw themselves beyond themselves in a re-gathering that makes it anew, a stranger to itself. This apparently immaterial, invisible and soundless supplement has been traditionally attributed to divine influence, to some kind of transfer and implant from a transcendental, aethereal elsewhere. Within the in-drawn air, something else, sourced by a god, gods, or *spirit* figures, enters, suffuses, the recipient and crucially pervades and shapes the creative faculty that directs the supplement into and applies it through specific senses and media. Breathing-in becomes something other than just ‘itself’, becomes ‘inspiring’, when it is suffused by this divine afflatus, a spirit, ghost, from elsewhere.

¹⁹ op. cit., p. 178.

But when the gods disappear the (in-)spiriting 'voice' ('voice' may cover a variety of offerings across all the senses) is perhaps transferred to the sprite of tradition itself – 'tradition's voice' as the siren from a possible dwelling place summoning the maker onto making's coast. This 'voice' epitomises, performs, is, the erotic pull of some elusive sense of tradition as a site-outside-and-beyond generating a seductive force that withdraws the one (subject) from both its self and its everyday ties. And today, still, in spite of our rejection and destruction of tradition(s) (our no longer knowing whether it or they cohere as a 'one', a unifying corps around a gathering of us as now just many), makers' invocation of their 'muse' to gloss the sourcing and emergence of the thing relies substantially on the Greek myths for poetising's origin: the poetic word, the song, the dance, celebrate and give thanks for the gods' provision of a spring's flow of life-granting pure water. The muse as infuser of the poetic into the maker's breath, into the flow of word, movement and song, recalls this celebratory thanksgiving of the intertwining of the human, the natural, and the divine. As thanks for the grant of life's essential flows, inspiration draws in this supplement of divine (inhuman, unnatural...) spirit through whose agency something, some taste, of a transcendent inhuman beyond may – this is the maker's infusing hope – turn the thing-made into a transmission from and for elsewhere.

In 'early' Greek culture the Nymphae, the water nymphs attached to particular wells and springs (constant flowing sources of nature's and thus the gods' most important gift to culture) were the pre-cursors of the nine female Greek muses to whom the sources of poets' inspiration were attributed. According to the poet Hesiod's theogony (725 BC) the Muses, gifted with prophetic and oracular powers, transmitted to the poet both the gift of song and the events to be sung. A song's, poem's, qualities were attributed to the poet's intake, an in-spiring infusion of the nymph's spirit. The flow of words, music, dance, and imagery were outcomes of this flowing (air as metaphoric water) fertilising source. What was breathed in was a near-divine (the nymphs were not full deities) afflatus the poet transformed directly into song. This intake of breath-water was what fertilised. Finding a supplement essential to art-making meant catching one's breath, interrupting it in the very motion of breathing in and transposing the 'gift' into the thing.

Although spiration is a rhythmic alternation of in-spiring...ex-piring, it is the in-drawing of in-spiry that is privileged, ex-piry being a rejection of the used-up – the turning point at the limit of in-spiry, the interruptive point of reversal before ex-piry precipitates that breath-catching moment (the in-between) when the sprite's erotic calling puts the words, images, sounds, touches, tastes, scents, in one's ears, eyes, mouth, nose, surfaces. Remembering Rimbaud, aside from reason's clutches, the 'I' becomes others beyond reason's grasp. In the coursing of subsequent expiry-inspiry the immaterial non-things displacing the 'I' are transferred into, metastasise in, the would-be art-things.

In diverse ways contemporary artists acknowledge their being in receipt of a summons from elsewhere, divine or not. Sometimes the classical derivation of the muse is referred to directly, as in Braque's graphic response to Hesiod's cosmogony. Ehrenzweig, in his psychoanalytic interpretation of the relationship between the stratifications of consciousness and creative practice, has explored the emergence of 'poemagogic fantasy' via Greek myths, and Hesiod in particular. Precursor of 'scientific' explanations of 'reality', he finds such myths rich in 'oral-schizoid materials' that recur in different forms across cultures and which are subject to the tensions of projection and containment in the creative process. From within the interests of art-making, Ehrenzweig's writing, though offering itself as a critique of and contribution to psychoanalytic theory, skilfully negotiates the issue of reductivism. Far from

showing art-making and its things as derivatives of psychic processes having nothing to do with art, he shows that they raise fundamental conceptual issues for psychoanalysis and that their debt to the symbolics of the Muse in Greek culture may offer psychoanalysis itself insights into its exploration of psychic processes.²⁰ Nevertheless this still remains a project in which art is to be placed within and according to the requirements of a conceptual paradigm external to art-making. It remains bound to the concerns of analysis and aesthetics rather than allowing practice to lead it out of itself, to undo it.

Kristeva, too, writing across the boundaries of psychoanalysis, semiotics, philosophy and the arts, shows how the latter can be significant resources for and challenges to established paradigms of analytical research and conceptualisation. In their very performance, the ‘how’ of the making, the arts’ things both open onto and are experimental explorations of the ways psychic processes are intertwined with language. As with Ehrenzweig but moving through and drawing together different fields of research, Kristeva approaches art as a kind of collaborator, rather than a corpus of distanced objects or symptoms to be explained and placed within an independent conceptual scheme. Thus in her early (1974) ‘Revolution in Poetic Language’²¹ she explores the dynamics of the relation between the semiotic and the symbolic realms. Significantly, in terms of the arts’ fusing of the sensual and the interpretive, the ‘semiotic’ names the drives (‘energy charges...psychical marks’²²) which she gathers under a term borrowed from Plato – the ‘chora’. Through this reiteration of a Greek term that also reminds us of the important role of Greek drama (and thus the muse) in helping to define the conceptual foci of psychoanalysis itself, she shows the necessity of a lively sense of the generative function of the chora. For it is ‘rhythmic space’ without thesis or position, where pre-symbolic (pre-Oedipal) ruptures and articulations in their simultaneity make the semioticised body ‘a place of permanent scission’.²³ And because, for Kristeva, these pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and discharges crucially ‘connect and orient the body to the mother’ we can find an anticipation of Irigaray’s subsequent concerns.

If art-making is the in-itself-for-itself exploration of the back-and-forth movement between the drives’ rhythmic space and symbolic signification (language in its multiple modes), then we ignore the matters constituting this flowing movement and its context at our peril. In following the ways that art can lead analysis, Kristeva takes us through a range of art-makings which perform a questioning whose outcomes (art’s things) unveil otherwise inaccessible terms of our becoming. Among others, Kristeva finds the writings of Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Joyce, Sollers, Celine, and de Sade, challenging our conventional ways of understanding and approaching “what goes on” in that indefinable zone of transition from the chora to signification.²⁴ While preserving and developing a complex analytical project Kristeva holds firmly to the independence and irreducibility of the arts’ things. However this difference is articulated, making and its things are seen not as objects to be explained (away) and thus positioned as subordinates of analysis, but rather as co-explorers. At the very least Kristeva displays a relation to writing about art that is partially defined and driven by a felt sense both of its indebtedness to art-things and its own fallibility. She knows that, like art-making, writing has to risk itself by placing itself in the care of the art-things. And, like art, while it risks coming back with nothing, it also gives it the chance of unanticipatable self-

²⁰ A. Ehrenzweig, ‘The Hidden Order of Art’, Paladin, St. Albans, 1973, esp. pp. 228 and 242 et seq.

²¹ J. Kristeva, ‘Revolution in Poetic Language’, op. cit.

²² Ibid., p. 24.

²³ Op. cit., p. 27.

²⁴ For the development of her writing about the relation between the arts and conceptualisation, see also her ‘Desire in Language’, Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, and ‘Powers of Horror’, op. cit.

transformations. Paralleling, perhaps, the maker's response to the muse's summons, in relating to the arts' things Kristeva's writing shows us that *it is necessary to give up analytic authority; to find what an art-thing may be performing one has to join it in its (and one's own...) weakness, to accept that it is making its way in a zone that is precisely the other of the forms of power and authority that rule in analysis and the quotidian*. Being open to and ready to drift toward the muse's call is a pre-condition for this becoming-different, this dis-traction. If we hold to some sense of a necessary inter-dependence of art-making and inspiration, performing it will entail its takeover by the dissipation of form, the pre-form of possible forms to come – the analytically incomprehensible.

It seems, then, that whatever the specific terms brought into play, any contemporary invocation of art-making as a being-called, as inspiration-dependent, has a pedigree that directs us toward unavoidable issues of practice across the arts. The seemingly distant (Greek) origins but insistent longevity of the invocation provide considerable support for art's 'difference', its incommensurable plane. For the ever-presence of the attribution of a giving-up, a loss of self to the muse as unplaceable other, sets art-making apart from reason-dependence. Invoking vocabularies of inspiration and call both allies making with culturally valued traditions (the legacies of the arts' pasts) and, at the sites of performing, insulates it simultaneously from demands of technical accounting. When, as under the systematics of contemporary representation, it is appropriated by the calculative, we can recognise that making and its things are intrinsically shaped by the unaccountable. Its errant appeal is to the other-than-reason. In this context, continuing appeal to the mythic progenitors of art-making may not feel utterly alien, though, at the institutional extreme, it may be difficult to accept continuity between state-and-capital sponsorship of the arts and the sougning of a divine afflatus...

On the other hand... conversationally, discursively, (self-)reflectively, we continue to move around in a textually similar world of interpretation: the gods, muses and nymphs are no longer guardians of our water-and-air supply, but in our continuing reliance on the trope of inspiration we abolish historicity and hurl ourselves backwards to self-elide with the earliest poetising. It seems that, whatever social transformations differentiate us from (some of) the 'origins' of our relation to poetising (the arts), whatever the extent of the changes mapped in histories of the arts, whatever the complexity of technoscientific research into and conceptualisations of human consciousness, feeling and becoming, when it comes to 'accounting' for art-making all such discoursing appears to be white noise. Despite the exorbitance of the full range of technoscientific practices whose discourses are routinely used to frame and shape the spectrum of quotidian becoming, everything that we gather under 'art-making', origination through inspiration, and the creative imagination, remains stubbornly elsewhere, an untouchable zone where making originates its unreasonables.

Not, of course, that the makers of would-be art-things are not interested in conceptualisations of the arts and many other things. The central role played by the academy, as both the home and factory for knowledge discourses and research, in the recruitment of art-makers, ensures their familiarity with the 'life' of conceptualising. Indeed makers often become intensely involved with particulars drawn from specific disciplines, their discourses and issues. However, the terms, if any, on which these may be withdrawn from the textual knowledge frame and context and drawn into the play of art-making remain both unique to each making project and, crucially, subject to the absolutely unanticipatable unplottable transformations defining the leap out of quotidian reasoning into art's felt-for de-reasonings. Used in the context of art, inspiration and originality point to making's suspension, scattering, dissolution

even, of the commonsense attitude and stance that defines everyday life and allows its (relatively) untroubled continuity as the world-taken-for-granted. The American poet Charles Olson points to this undoing's provocative return to first things (spiration) as a crucial constituent of poetising in remarking,

‘feeling and desires and breath
the cause of the words coming into existence
ahead of them...’

for the returning aims for,

‘that place where breath comes from, where breath has its
beginnings,... where... all act springs.’²⁵

This tumble into another mode of becoming, involving the suspension of all the practical relevances (all the tacit psycho-social-linguistic assumptions) that sustain the shared world of commonsense, *generates, sets up, an utterly different plane whose very movement is the alienating of the commonsense world's means and ends*. And precisely because the knowledge-aims of conceptualising tie it to generalising and typifying, all attempts to conceptualise making's becoming-other in terms drawn from generalising paradigms and discourses, come up against the double trouble of art-making's irreconcilables: making makes absolutely singular one-offs from within a moving stance toward 'life' (the commonsense world – a composite of perspectives, feelings and languages) whose 'point' is *to be not-that-world but part of art's*. It is not a challenge to that world by the world shown, done, performed, made out, differently. In its doing it becomes (it has to, it has no alternative) indifferent to the commonsense world as it is lived, for its only concern is the world it is making, just this once, for art. Thus whatever the terms inspiration and origination try to offer as making's mode and concerns, they are markers and protectors of art's difference, making's self-generated task of becoming incommensurable. They act as reminders that the thrust of their making in relation to art is to try to find and hold to an opening, the stretching out of a 'somewhere else', that cannot be brought under the rule of what commonsense and the technosciences represent as measurable space and time. The hoped-for supplement in the intake of breath is the interruptive break that opens out, splits, the ordinary flow and allows a breath (a breath that is more of a suspiring rather than a simple exhalation) to escape and to shape up as its own elsewhere. Beginning in and always returning to its breath-dependency, making's performance faces its permanent challenge of how to find and then sustain inspiration, to breathe its way into and out of, through, its openings – how to enable interruption, which is precisely the other of any 'method'.

Once finished, after inspiration, recuperations and re-fashionings have done with the thing, the latter is, for the maker, a thing of the past, a thing whose potential life-after-death, its possible becomings in the commonsense world, will be decided by others. Set aside by the maker, for whom its call has faded away, the thing hangs on in an in-between zone, no longer engaged by art-making's desires and relevances but not yet accommodated by culture's everyday concerns. Hovering there, the thing figures no more than breathing's end, a last gasp site, exhaled but not yet resuscitated. Yet, simply by being finished with, it is now closer to culture than to its maker. For the latter can now only engage it through concerns and relevances of the attitude of everyday life within which the questioning of the thing's possible circulation is a 'practical' matter. If the the thing is to be set moving on culture's terms then means-ends rationalities have to unseat and displace art's unreason. Under current conditions

²⁵ Charles Olson, 'Collected Prose', ed. by Donald Allen and Benjamm Friedlander, University of California, Berkeley, 1997, pages 202 and 249.

of the arts' subsistence it is at this juncture that the thing's fate cautions us to consider, to be very circumspect about, the rhetoric of inspiration. For, however much it may point to vital components of making that ally it with, make it continuous with the supposed beginnings of human poetising, nevertheless both the wider context of the thing's making and its possible destination as an art-thing now seem to cut it off unequivocally from such beginnings.

In the shadow of planetary destruction and environmental degradation the thing can no longer be a trouble-free thank-offering to guardians of pure natural flows. It is not something produced in the service of the traditional fixed sites of institutional and personal patronage. Nor is it one of a relatively restricted number of such objects to be circulated slowly, aesthetically and critically appraised, and appreciatively shared by small 'discerning' elite groups. No, its current destiny is quite unlike that of any of its predecessors.

Surviving Institutionalised Spiration

Under the controlling rule of calculative representation, management of the integrated spectacle, a complex global infra-structure operates to provide for the seemingly endless consumption-production of the arts-in-general. Electronic reproduction and transmission provide for near-instant circulation of all the things that can be turned into machine-readable simulacra and forms. Across the mass electronic media this facility embraces the arts; the continuity of its contents is ensured by a complementary system of mass education and training that provides, generates, makers to excess (excess, that is, of any defined knowable (let alone realisable...) 'need'). The system ensures that it has a huge surplus of suppliers available to maintain its multiple flows.

And yet, and this is where the paradoxical relation between thing and institution can be most clearly witnessed, *there is no call for any particular thing*. What the representing system ensures is the production of a vast collection of things-in-general from which the number appropriate to the system's steady (planned for) expansion can be recruited. The maker is called (inspired...) to make something 'indexical', something absolutely particular and peculiar to her/him and tied to, defined by, the context of its making. But this discrete thing qua itself, being nothing but itself in its absolute difference, is always initially surplus to others' requirements. Being completely un-called for nobody could have wanted just this thing alone. Its emergence is always entirely unprecedented, dependent upon the chance conjunctions of the maker's making-context and felt-for relation to art-as-other. Despite elaborate classification systems (conceptual, historical, institutional) across and within each of the arts, in which individual things are textually fixed, makers still make, according, at least in part, to the thing's demands (what the thing calls for) as it emerges. And what it calls for, what the maker (still and in spite of the massivity of the gathering and classifying system constructed only according to the conceptualiser's judgments about what is typical, shared, between makers, between things) holds to, though only just in some cases, is the making of something in its difference, an unrepeated 'original' – a thing defined by the singularity of its being-called-forth as just this thing. Sifting and selecting from the uncountable mass of these made singularities is the everyday work of the aestheticising institutions that routinely accomplish the representing system's 'needs'; they set up the only current 'home' for the arts. This is what it is set up to do. On behalf of the representation machinery this work generates and sustains a representative flow of things coming and going (disappearing) across its sites. And, complementing this flow, it devises and routinises ways to ensure the reciprocal recruitment and preparation of responders whose consistency of cultural consumption completes and maintains the cycle.

So making and its upshots only come to have a ‘social life’ (the other to the necessary solitude of the making process) on the terms, operated and offered with consummate skill (technical bravura...), of the experts – the knowledge-and-means managers – responsible for the flow and exchange of ‘cultural goods’. The arts are framed, directed, and thus permeated, by the rationalities (the discourses and vocabularies) of instrumental knowledges whose very mode of being is exactly what art-making, through the legacy of the moderns, seeks to cut itself off from. Makers, as part of their own self-reflection, are unavoidably partially shaped and positioned by institutional agendas that have developed their own critical discourses as tools of both survival and management, and that treat makers as objects of knowledge. In this way makers are drawn inevitably into the play of knowledge practices.

Entry into making is almost exclusively now via disparate forms of academic preparation and ‘training’ carried out within institutions whose very point is the production and reproduction of specialised, disciplinary-specific, knowledges. In this context all ‘trainees’ have to become, to perform as, part-time ‘theorists’ in order to both negotiate the terms of their making situation (supervised and assessed) and to ensure accreditation (to pass... on ...). Controlling knowledges constitute the real conditions of making’s everyday life and thus have to be engaged with, taken on as the site of a struggle, as possibly transformable (but possibly not...) components of makers’ responses to their situations. For has not art-making since the moderns depended precisely on the maker’s self-critical response to the specificity of feelings engendered by her or his present situation (always for the moderns a situation of crisis)? Becoming modern for the maker has been and still is, as ‘the modern’ seems to fall away behind us, to make in response to ‘the now’, to what it is that critically differentiates the maker’s felt response to this ‘now’ in its specificity. Somehow, then, the maker’s felt response to art’s summons to ‘otherness’, to become, that is, the ‘elsewhere’ of the forms of becoming ordering everyday life under techno-capitalism, has to be filtered through the very rationalities and interpretive forms which are its anathema.

Heeding the call in order to get to an edge, culture’s derm, now necessitates a taking-on by passing through and out of the discourses and operations routinely responsible for siting, valuing, judging and routinely conferring an identity on the arts’ things. Because this site-work is on a post-industrial scale (hyper-production) and heavily defended (being extremely well versed in the manipulation and administrative management of its sophisticated placing schema) it is up to every analytic trick in the book – a hand-book it writes and re-writes for itself in and as the course of its own quotidian and in its own self-interest and self maintenance. The prime concern of these siting, sending and placing organisations has to be not ‘art’ but their own long-term survival. The solitary making of singular things responsive to an inspirational call is simply irrelevant to such organisations (the ‘academy’ included...).

Confronted by this battery of organisational controls, making has to develop idiosyncratic (that is, un-ruled, perverse, ob-cultural) ways of surviving, of living-on, in this tension: to hear, heed, and hold to the call while undertaking a ‘theoretic’ (thoughtful and within reason) appraisal of the very instrumental-theoretical practices that are responsible for its own daily crisis in the first (and last) place. And this part-analysed response always has to be in relation to its own unique situation, different for each maker and each occasion of making. Somehow it has to find, make for, its own way of simultaneously colluding (participating) and escaping – being-within-and-without. This paradoxical bind carries the inevitable danger of falling prey to the extraordinarily subtle wiles of the ‘enemy’ (never, obviously, a simple enemy because it tempts and seduces through providing a range of seemingly ‘caring’ supports and aids) along the way. Making, in order to make out, to preserve the possibility of getting to its

own ‘out(side)’, has to maintain itself through a shuttling back and forth between different sites of felt-thought. It thus performs, lives, as a matter of real ‘practice’, a self-disjunction, self-splitting, that manifests, through its schizo-movements and its remains (the makings themselves), the fall away from the unified self celebrated as both the core subject of Romanticism-Modernism and the self-conscious rational theorist-subject of technoscience.

Practically set up by situational exigencies, the maker, already thus a boundaryless non-unifiable field of several, effects performance (what goes into making) as a precarious collaging of bits and processes that can never quite stick together or form an integrated ‘one’. Each making may appear to be singular (just this thing – poem, play, painting, performance and so on), but the singularity dissolves when the swarming that constitutes how it appears before and to us is engaged. The ‘it’ becomes a ‘they’. The emergent things are only ‘one’ in the sense of being ‘one-offs’ – conglomerates, combines, specific to to each making-event but having disparate non-unifiable debts and citations. Each offers itself as a fragment of fragments spilling out into the world and unassimilable to any theorisable (art-historical or whatever) whole. It is constituted by hovering fragments unable to settle down into a unifiable structure on some common ground. It may thus be that the ability and tendency of the arts’gests to unsettle those who seek to engage them stems from their own being definitively unsettled.

Making, as a practical exploration (alright, a re-search if you will, but always aside from any academic interests...) of this multiplicity, thus performs, lives through as a revelation (hopefully...), the very splits, disjunctions, conflicts, voids, theorised diversely by those contemporary analytical-critical discourses which attempt to explicate, represent, the ‘nature’ of our historical subjectivity. Parallel to the ‘theoretical practices’ of knowledge-discourses (which are themselves always caught up, framed and tintured by the instrumental demands of their own contexts of practice – hanging on for dear life to the practicalities of long-term survival), art-making, in its now enforced highly reflexive modes, lives on through (this is its post-ontological survival tactic) performing displays of edgy multiplicity; it shows, in its doing and in its remnants, the decline and loss of modernity’s self. For making-toward-art is treated as a site of possibility, a zone of experimentation before the law within which art-as-art celebrates (euphorically makes light of) that which in the world of quotidian practice may be experienced as the most profound threat. This ‘before the law’ echoes, perhaps, not only Kafka’s offer of the seeker’s plight, but also the ‘generous law’ cited by Philip Guston which tacitly allows law to begin by preceding it with something much more relaxed – the out-law, the yet-outside, of the law-to-come.²⁶ Performing thus chances, risks, itself, while knowing full well that its remnants will all too soon be swept up, collected, sifted, sorted, and hierarchically classified into safe unities assimilated to the law. For the ever-circling predatory institutional scavengers are intent on turning everything into grist for their glowing electrosatanic representing mills.

But, because the performing processes are subject to continuous analytical-critical scrutiny and assessment, and are both parallel and proximate to this analytical work that routinely gathers them up, they are well aware of their own status as objects of knowledge for others. Indeed, since the moderns’ legacy of reflexive inquiry as a defining constituent of practice, performing for art entails a self-scrutiny that takes on the conditions under which it lives. Thus the terms of both education and training and aesthetic-critical institutional reception become potential ‘materials’ whose ‘effects’ are felt and drawn into the making of the arts’

²⁶ For Guston’s thinking on plight and tactics see Ross Feld, ‘Guston In Time’, Counterpoint, New York, 2003.

things. Performing appropriates and turns to its own felt needs whatever fragments of this invading context its particular projects call for. Making recognises that what it now has to answer to in its things is always a for-the-nonce congealing of irreconcilable tensions. It learns to acknowledge that the call is not singular but a confrontation between insistent but conflicting demands (of the muse and institutional requirements for example).

A defining constituent of performing's plight is thus to know that, in responding to art's summons, it is also taking on and taking into itself the not-art interests that now set up and manage the arts' life under representation. As unknowable as ever, the call's source (this being-driven-toward-art) is a troubling troubled forced amalgam without unity. Immersed in and participating in a culture that lives by the efficacy of practical knowledges, performing has both to attach itself to knowledge-generating projects while simultaneously struggling to suspend their concerns. It has somehow to hold on to the other, to the other voice (unreason), in the face of demands already defining its own vision of practice, for making to be expansively 'meaningful', accommodatable by the voices of reason (institutions, critical aesthetics...).

Yet the performing that is a response to the conflictual source is a specific kind of performance whose effect-trace is embedded in the thing emerging from it. Thus, in and as its performance, making effects a holding together (just this once, for each performing is particular) of irreconcilable tensions; it attempts to attend to, to respond to, the source's demands. *But this holding together has nothing to do with knowledge.* It is not an attempt to make a knowledge claim through the made thing. It never involves a conceptual (theoretical-analytical-critical) claim, for art-making does not offer a path to knowledge as the latter is now understood, put to work, in the commonsense of the surrounding culture. It makes no claim to have found, revealed, unveiled, the sources of its call to perform. *It does not perform enlightenment.* Rather it is the only way makers can find in their current situation (plight...) of entwining the call's obscure emergence with their desire and feelings for art. It performs this irresistible affection as its only way of escaping from the damaging tensions it would be left with if it failed to respond. The performance effects a kind of discharge that very temporarily disperses some of the tensions of the plight. In Thomas Bernhard's 'Yes' the writing-through of the narrator (a scientist of anti-bodies analysing his own isolation...) performs the very thing his writing endlessly and virtuosically circles around. He reports on his 'boundlessly unveiling' himself to his neighbour (Moritz – who may be taken as a surrogate for the text's reader...):

'As if intellectual hoards and intellectual rubbish had piled up within me over the years, I had, that afternoon, after crouching for hours on the floor at home, set out through the wood towards Moritz's house in order to discharge myself.'²⁷

This writing-as-discharge, which may partially drive his own performance, is explored by Bernhard through continual narrative and self-referential tropes across his novels. In 'Yes' it is explicitly linked to the narrator's search for some kind of redemption.²⁸ Such redemption may be fleeting and very hard to come by where the making of 'out' is hemmed in and turned back 'in' and against itself by the demands of institutional representation. Surrounded, seized and sized up by these diverse practical theorisings the arts are never freed from controlling discourses, each trying to place them and their things according to their interests. Their voices infiltrate and inflect the call.

²⁷ Thoma Bernhard, 'Yes', University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, pp. 16-17.

²⁸ Op. cit., pp. 15, 16.

It is, however, in the ‘academy’ (a complex hierarchy of organisations ordered around the tense relation between knowledge-generation/dissemination, training for ‘work’, and modes of social control (rewards and punishments for example)) where the arts are most explicitly topicalised as theorisable objects of knowledge and as resources for wider agendas of socio-political economy. When performing is close to, enclosed by, knowledge-questioning work under its disciplinary labels, it has to participate. It has to engage continuously – this constitutes its organisational daily life – with the question of what it is answerable to. And it has to do this as if it, performing, were precisely a matter of finding assessable knowledge. Somehow it has to mime, to fake, knowledge-making work. It has to appear to be a first-order knowledge generator – this is part of its performance! Subject to the academy’s scrutinising evaluating procedures and requirements, it is treated as if it were responsible to and grounded in a revealable idea or body of ideas, a truth claim perhaps, or a definable rule-governed and thus trainable ‘skill’, that would mark the boundary of its interest, the edge of its force-field, and enable it to be represented as a ‘discipline’ alongside its academic partners. Thus positioned it can then be classified, assimilated and assessed according to outputs and needs on the same terms as other disciplines.

Aaaah, if only the arts, as zones of making, were ‘disciplines’, grounded subject areas with definable conceptualisable boundaries! If only we could confidently gather them up with their collegial peers as sharing a common project – the socialising constitution and dissemination of knowledges! The academy, as the supposedly independent (‘interest-free’!) site of knowledge’s production, protection and guarantee, has to assume, indeed demands (how could it fail to as knowledge’s guardian?), the presence of a law or rule the application of which operates to maintain the identity and difference of distinct named knowledge territories. Hovering close by and in between the disciplines, as a dialectical clarifier of their grounding assumptions and logics of inquiry, is philosophy, itself treated as a separate but therapeutic master-discipline. Things gathered in each territory are there through subservience to the rule and in homage to and maintenance of the name, each name invariably bearing within it an enormous legacy of historical associations that constitutes its content.

To operate successfully in the academy each of the arts has to appear to become such a rule-grounded and bounded territory with the means (the hoped-for rationally accountable routine procedures) for assessing its products and maintaining its boundaries. It has to appear ‘like’, to perform as, an acceptable peer among every other academic discipline. But however skilful its performances as knowledge-mimes, we ‘know’ (in the ‘know-how’ of making’s ways...), deeply (we feel it too...), that this is not, in the end (the very same end which making continually seeks to grapple with...) and the beginning, what it does, what they do. To recognise this gap, which is continually disavowed in the institutions’ routine practices, is to become witness to some of the pains of art’s plight.

What if the driving call (to poetise, compose, improvise, paint, shape, perform, dance...), insistent but obscure, issues from unplaceable, unknowable ‘sources’? What if it dis-places ‘place’ (and thus any idea of a ground) entirely? Without reason... without recognising any one else’s requirement to give (socially ‘acceptable’...) reasons? What if it seems to point the receiver away from anything resembling a rule-guided technique, accumulation, or coherent narrative toward, perhaps, rule-avoidance, rule-ironising, rule-dissolution, toward gaps in existing ‘structures’ (of whatever...) through which performing might slip into a where-when unrecognisable, indefinable, according to knowledge’s space-time coordinates? Then

performing might well be an unruly ‘on-the-way-away-and-outward’ entirely lacking the promise (plight-as-pledge...) of any guaranteeable, accountable (and thus measurable-exchangeable) outcome. It might amount to a sloping off, a slinking away, a disinclining (a stubborn ‘preferring not to...’), shunning altogether knowledge’s unifying forms, a becoming-illiterate, in order to enter the dispersed privacy of the other-than-one, that which is not yet recognisable in the terms of everydayness, of publicly shared and certified knowledges. Such shunning is the ‘before’, the in advance, of socialisation and its enculturing languages. Once some responsibility has been handed over to the call-to-art (itself necessarily ‘occurring’ before all responsibility, let alone epistemology...) there is no simple path or right of return to a knowledge-community, let alone one for which calculative value-assessment is a crucial constituent of its routine practices. Discussing the poetics of his film-making and writing, Tarkovsky notes that,

‘The poet has nothing to be proud of: he is not master of the situation but a servant... his every work is like a deed he has no power to annul...’²⁹

For the call is precisely an interruption of all that, a sirenic dis- and ex-tracting that withdraws the receiver from subservience to (any) knowledge’s rule.

In his exploration of the consequences of Heidegger’s question as to whether an ‘experience with language can open the way for thinking as well as for poetry as a mode of responsibility’³⁰, Bruns notes that, ‘If language speaks, it is not as a revelation but as an interruption, a call that calls thinking away from the calculative and cognitive into the proximity of the other.’³¹ He suggests that such a thinking- event ‘frees thinking from philosophy’, and, ‘...like poetry, can be thought of as a refusal of philosophy.’³² Once the call has been heard and followed, then there is no comfortable way back into submission to the rule. For such interruptions, on withdrawing the unified subject from its position in the subject-object relation, deprive it of its masterful adversarial relation to its object. There is no longer ‘a’ subject ‘there’ to make the return journey to everydayness, only a loose self-scattering very temporary ‘combine’ inclining away from knowledge’s (commonsense’s) ordering rules. These are the ‘ground’ rules that provide for reciprocity, for the possibility of a sense in common and thus of a community-to-come in the first place.

Caught up in fragmentation, in play in between the shards, performing is thus irreconcilable with the academy’s need to order the knowledges it houses within singular disciplinary frames generated and sustained by communal adherence to norms of methodic (reproducible) practice. This latter can hardly stand as either a model or a home for making-toward-art. Performing’s course, and the ‘cause’ it lives for – its being-called to drift unaccountably away from culture’s holds toward art’s desert – can only survive in permanent tension with the academy’s demands. What may, superficially, look like a welcome zone of both protection and generation for making across the ‘creative’ arts (all now seemingly ‘securely’ ensconced in the academy) is simultaneously a radical threat to the vision of making inaugurated by the moderns. For the vision envisioned precisely a fall out of culture, out of the institutional binds of the quotidian, a fall out whose consequence would be that performing’s gesticulations would carry within themselves the potential to move, to dis-culture, to de-discipline, others (respondents) on behalf of living’s as yet un-lived and un-livable

114 Andrei Tarkovsky, ‘Sculpting In Time’, Faber, London, 1989, p. 43.

115 G. Bruns, ‘Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy’, Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 1997, p. 105.

116 Ibid.

³² Ibid.

possibilities. Under institutional authority (with the state as all-powerful backstop) performing is transformed into, and thus represented to the culture and to potential makers, as an activity subordinate to a hierarchy of assessment and accounting criteria grounded in the relation between knowledge, technique(s), and productivity. In this context, calling can only be countenanced, can only have ‘worth’, if its outcomes can be transformed into the output of measurable and thus assessable ‘work’. So much for the divine afflatus...

Perhaps the paradoxical tension defining the relation between art-making and the academy is experienced most acutely in the confrontation between on the one hand, the calls’ obscure origins, demands, and anarchic consequences, and on the other, the academy’s combined demand for functional accountability (to political economy), methodic productivity (of bodies and ‘ideas’ as knowledges), and critically reflexive knowledge. The severity and effects of this tension alert us to the complexity of performing’s current plight. For it highlights the continuous enforced metamorphosis of both artists-as-performers and their gests under techno-capitalism.

The performer and the gest can no longer epitomise, are not in continuity with the romantic-modernist project’s singular subject. Detaching itself from culture, the latter was shown as delving into its own buried dark recesses, returning with the spoils worked out in the form of a unified, hopefully ‘uplifting’ ‘out-lifting’ thing, a thing offering a moment in which one was lifted out of the ‘knowns’ of culture. This subject’s hope was for the thing to have both caught the moment of its performance as the felt response to its present context, and to have transcended this moment by simultaneously establishing its own continuity with and membership of an accommodating tradition. In this joining the thing’s role, as performer of modernity’s moment, was to modify tradition, however slightly, by its own difference, thus revealing tradition as a still open possibility. For the moderns the virtue of tradition, its promise as a seductive site, lay in its welcome of those things that figured (in whatever their chosen medium/media) the ineffable. It offered a ‘home’ precisely to those makings, to the ‘moments’ and ‘places’ in them, which were irreconcilable with the cultural conventions of ‘home’. Tradition was re-defined as the gathering place for re-membling the other-than-what-is, the homeless unnamable obscure that always drifted beyond culture’s edges.

In its very anarchical obscurity the call to make is not only a source of excitement, joy even, for the maker, through its offer of a release into making’s apparent freedom, but, precisely as interruption, as the putting out of joint of taken-for-granted orders, a source of potential trouble and certainly anxiety. Furthermore, anxiety may also be provoked by the possible interference that may invade and thus confuse the calling itself. Because of their distinctive seductive ways, the many voices of representation unavoidably infiltrate and infect the call itself, subtly shifting its texture and pulling it round to institutional interests. Being attentive to the call thus requires ever more sensitive antennae for picking up these invasions, infections and shifts. The rupture can be seen, then, as not only a fall into the (partly) open, but also as a particular kind of wound, an affliction, the fissure as a site of troubles. It reveals the fragility of everyday ‘securities’ and, by insisting on a ‘giving up’ (of controls), endows the now fractured ex-subject not with power or mastery but rather a weakness, a becoming-off-guard that gives up on the ‘I’’s conventional responsibilities (its worldly potential). It allows for its splitting up and appropriation by multiple others in a flow that carries it off and away. No longer obligated to continuity, the ‘I’ drifts away into the she, he, it, they, into perhaps what Blanchot names as *‘Le Neutre’*.³³ Detachment from the quotidian entails

³³ M. Blanchot, ‘The Step Not Beyond’, op. cit., p. 35.

dispossession, a release from the force (the very real representation-invested powers) of habit.³⁴

The attentiveness summoned by the call is paradoxically an attention that is loose, out of control; the tach, the clasp or link (the continuous work done by the 'I' in the living present), is broken temporarily, leaving something no longer recognisable as or in terms of 'force', to maintain both the 'listening' and the at-tach-ment to art, a gathering concentrating compression aside from any controlling 'will'. Through this gathering, art's bits and pieces may just eventually be assembled into something like a 'formed thing'. This forceless attention, the back-and-forth of an arhythmic vacillating scansion, stops the 'I' in its tracks, diverts it and turns it out of its self, enabling and setting up its own conversion; it approximates to its unknowable companion that may become an 'addressable you', as Celan offers the 'other' to whom the poet may respond.³⁵

But, of course, being placeless, the very dispersion of place, this 'you', this other, however proximate it seems, comes from all over the place, from nowhere in particular. Swarming nearby, its bits and pieces resonate to shape an almost graspable call that out-sounds the distracted 'me'. The disappearing 'one' leaves behind only self-less shreds, little 'its', a glomerate attentive residue whose very point is to make something out of the call's summons and offerings. And the emergent something is filtered into and through whatever these attentive 'its' have retained of the question(s) of art. Yet what is left to the 'it' of art-as-it-was (tradition?) will, in this de-taching process, necessarily be vague and unfixable. Attentive and anonymous, hovering in this out-of-time, the 'its-combine' is held up in the unassessable risk (and hence its affliction) of returning empty-handed, with nothing; it is carried along either by something that turns out to be nothing art-full, or with something resonating with art's aside (its forceless slant). Perhaps within the risk, even the hope for art, art as hopeful offer, may need to be set aside as too worldly, too caught up with world-time, and the interests of quotidian becoming. Certainly the rhetorics and forces of representation seek endlessly to instill the attractions of the worldly into all forms of making so that they may align themselves with institutional interests and their all-consuming rituals. Having travelled through and been partially formed by such rhetorics in their journeys toward making, it is very difficult for makers to effect their complete suspension: representation takes its toll by re-directing making to the demands of knowledge and production.

If, then, the call to making is this tension in the face of the open, of promise and wound, coping with it under the seizure by representation becomes the constant debilitating challenge of survival. Surviving in, for and with art now involves a double tension: firstly, there is the tension of the break from the quotidian, of living the back-and-forth between making and the everyday; and secondly, there is the tension of making out within and on calling's terms. For to try to live for and make toward the outside that is art-as-potential, on behalf of a making and its things that are tangential to culture, would be to survive only through a becoming that straddles the promise-wound tension. Seeking to make in response to art's promise – its pledge of otherness – entails surviving within the fracture, the interruption that wounds one's relation with the securities and reassurances of the everyday, with all those things that commonsense offers to put one's mind at rest. Yet if the call is experienced as exigency, as that which must be attentively followed, then the summoned has to embrace this tension

³⁴ M. Blanchot, 'The Writing of the Disaster', op. cit., p. 15.

³⁵ See Paul Celan's essay 'The Meridian' for a discussion of this 'addressable you' (and much else besides of direct relevance to an appreciation of poetising) in, 'Collected Prose', op. cit., pp. 37-56.

come what may. The challenge is how to survive within in order to be able to continue offering little gestures of without.

Living-on in and for art-as-going-beyond may now be condemned to the mereness of survival, to clinging on somehow in the teeth of and in spite of representation. This effects a marked break with and is in stark contrast to that which the moderns' breakthrough, break-out, seemed to have instituted as art's hope: the shaping of a trajectory for performing as a utopian passing through, out and beyond. The moderns sought out performance as a living-beyond, an ultra-vival, that might offer pointers to pathways that could be searched out by willing respondents. Whether anything of this attempt at the ultra-vival can be reconciled with the realities of performing's everyday life under representation remains, hopefully, a still open question. However the manifest technical skills that manage and coordinate the driving force of representation appear to have a limitless ability to work constantly (and invariably successfully) to ensure the near instant co-optation and socialisation of everything. The fate of any call to elsewhere turns now on how it is filtered out, always differently for every maker, through the sieves of representation that set the terms of daily living. The 'comforts' (still globally very local) arising from the application of the calculative to the production of the terms of quotidian life cannot embrace or be reconciled with art's making-toward-otherness.

We are thus returned unavoidably by this irreconcilable tension to makers' relation to all the performing matters that can be gathered around the possibility of 'inspiration'. For it seems makers are pitched into performing for art by forces that energise two utterly different trajectories, or planes of becoming, planes that in the course of performing may collide but cannot coincide. *At the least there are two different pulls, alternating attractions, that cannot be fused.* Inspiration now gathers as a tense oscillation between two relations to breathing that pulse differently: the interruptive syncopated breathing pulsed by the drifting uncertainties, the errancies of the chances, the wait for the summons of the other voice(s), is countered by the measured spiration demanded by the institutional call for sustained assessable performance. Dependent on such institutional rationalities for its public life (representation), making-for-art is drawn into the flat measured breathing of the disembodied calculative mode of means-thought. Making's 'life' becomes the disjunctive conjunction of these immiscible flows.

Transforming the Flows – The Ways of Poiesis

If, as Irigaray shows us,³⁶ air and the reciprocal unhindered flow that are the maternal gift of gestation are what philosophy, critical thought, has concealed and fails to 'see' or declare about its own sourcing, then any consideration of the maker's relation to inspiration has to confront the kind of air and flows within which it is now swirled. As such air- and flow-dependent becomings we are all subject to the unavoidable exigencies, the material (and originally maternal...) conditions of spiration. The arhythmic alternations characterising inspiration's unpredictable schizoid trajectory, cannot escape the fate, the constitution, of the flows (airs and fluids) that animate us. In drawing the analytical voice, the text of philosophy, out of its gendered ontology in which language (thought, spirit, mind, and so on) and being coincide as the 'one' that, for philosophy, defines us (originally), Irigaray takes us back to our infusion-dependency. She reminds us of both the originating maternal gift of reciprocal flow and of the philosophically unspeakable air into which we are plunged on release from the flow. Our being-languaged is only a belated part of our story, for, in being sourced by the

³⁶ The following remarks take up issues raised in Irigaray op. cit.; see particularly ch. 12.

(m)other we remain flow-dependent becomings. Our ineffable fluidity, what moves us and allows us to move incessantly, comes from elsewhere. It is not subject to the scissions of language's (and thus reason's) endless articulations.

It seems that Irigaray draws us back through the medium of air into a different sourcing zone, that of the undivided reciprocal flow. Any subsequent 'one' (Language, Mind, Consciousness, and so on) is an imposition that conceals our original indebtedness. Falling into air at birth, breathing 'for ourselves', we are then drawn inexorably into and under a different 'one', a 'one' that enforces a proscription of the lost reciprocity. Air thus becomes our flowing junction. As our region, what allows us to persist and become in something like a region, it is the substance that both reminds us of the original flowing that we are, but simultaneously, as medium, it allows for our metastasising into the unifying being of language. In this transforming shift we learn to forget, to repress, our indebtedness to flowing and its source. But are we left by Irigaray with the imminent threat of air as another 'one' over and against the 'one' of reason? If she shows us how reason/ontology/analysis have repressed both their reciprocal sourcing and the medium through which they move, we need to guard against any lapse into an equivalent hypostasising of air, of our animating fluids.

For we know now only too well, though without yet being able to cope with its globally horrendous consequences, that 'air', our very medium, and, yes, our essential but partial sourcing, while being what surrounds and suffuses us, is not a 'one'. There is no such thing as a singular static 'pure air'. Like the reciprocal flows of our maternal sourcing, air is a multiple, and, increasingly, a polluted, deteriorating multiple. We cannot do without it, its manyness – its constantly shifting rhythms, pressures, speeds, constituents. This very multiple is an ever-changing mix, an ubalanced balance of the beneficial and the deadly. It is certainly a very far cry from the air surrounding the pure springs celebrated by the Nymphae as art's emergent muses. And the passage of this mixture about and through us is, in its turn, bound to an atmospherics, a now always climactic climatics whose chaotic motion we try to grasp through the calculations of our meteorological (technical) reasoning. We are buffeted uncontrollably by our essential blessing, a blessing that both gifts and appropriates us through our spiration. And, if we are possessed by the analytically repressed air, perhaps we should complement air with something else equally essential, equally bound up with our maternal sourcing, equally multiple, equally fluid, and equally threatened, something that takes us back to those same Nymphae gifting song to the Greek poets: water. If the poets' songs were a gifting-thanks for and celebration of the life-maintaining spring, then inspiration entails the entangling of these enlivening flowing thicknesses.

Though the philosophers may have repressed them, treated them as aphiosophical, or as matters only for a philosophically clarified technoscience, the makers of the arts' things certainly have not. Bound up with inspiration, these enabling material media (though, as our living conditions, they are infinitely more than just 'media'...), which recur as founding 'subject matter' and the possibility of our moving-becoming, are prime defining resources for makers across the arts. Indeed, one of the arts, music, depends absolutely upon air for the emergence and transmission of its sounds-as-reverberations. Music is so closely bound up with air that the word itself is used as an occasional homonym for a melody or song. And whatever else may be done to them subsequently (transformation into codes that allow them to be carried by other vehicles (radio waves, magnetic tape, discs, memory cards...), music's sounds emerge from instruments and voices as air-borne vibrations. Making music thus begins in and as air-dedicated (and thus celebrated) pulsing practices. Music is an exposing exploration of the reverberating possibilities of the relations between air, matter, and the

human body. We know through the technics of sound reproduction, amplification and architectural resonance, the ways in which atmospherics define the terms of music's possible performance and reception.

Every sound's perdurance is dependent upon the relation between the vibration emitted, the conditions of its material media (air, solids, and so on), the resistances of 'obstacles' (walls, bodies, things), and the psycho-physiological conditions of the receiving ear(s). These very 'technics' are an admission that, far from there being such a thing, a 'one', as 'pure air', or an achievable ideal condition for any musical performance (or recording of such), the volatility of atmospherics, their context and specific qualities, ensure that the sensual experience of music for both performers and listeners is dependent upon the finally uncontrollable and aleatory. And surely this is the groundless ground of music's absolutely fleeting charm, the otherness of its near-instant disappearance.³⁷

At the very least the gentle irony of the breathily noiseless silence of John Cage's '4. 33'' draws us into this chancy play. From the most rehearsed performance of a written score through to the 'open' improvisation free of any pre-structure, music is the celebratory exploration of our flow dependence; it is where the inter-play of inspiration with an actual spiration conspires to generate a pulsed re-sounding that is about nothing other than its own performance. All the arts share this 'nothing other' as their founding 'unreason', but hope to draw forth from it some thing that combines, uniquely on each occasion of making (performance), two singularities: firstly the specific medium's, or combined media's, singular properties, with, secondly, the maker's unique response to these properties under the context-specific conditions of each making. Each time the hope is that a call's scission and inspiration's drifting errancy will, together, deliver irrecusable fragments from this 'nothing other'. The things emerging from the delivery are subjected by makers to an infinitely broad spectrum of response from simple acceptance to elaborate mutation and development. Released by makers they invite respondents to re-animate their memorialising of the otherness of their origination. Their textures, the gestures concealed in and as their surfacing, perform in multiple ways this tribute to the processes of their emergence. Their 'means' of possible attraction thus make reference (show overtly or covertly) to their indebtedness to the matters and materials which pulsed and consumed their making.

Sometimes, as in the case of the Akhmatova poem at this chapter's head, the debt and the process are topicalised explicitly. More frequently, perhaps, inspiration's offerings insinuate themselves in and as the thing's texturing, its compressions, rhythms, syncopes, juxtapositions, and the feelings these may generate during a respondent's re-animation. Where the life of spiration – breathing as the essential 'means' to a 'reading's' 'revoicing' – is itself the underlying concern, point, of the making, as in poetry, then breath's movement and role may be both the 'always present' though concealed 'theme', as well as a literal or oblique 'referent' in a poem. Celan's titling of a collection of his poems as '*Atemwende*' – 'Breathturn' – offers a gathering site for such (in-)spirational citation. And the invocation of the multiple implications of 'turn' here, making direct reference to turning as the constitution of both vers-ing and spiration (the crucial 'point' where breathing-in turns into breathing-out) reveals how, for Celan, writing poetry involved a plunge into fundamental life processes. In his introduction to his translation of a selection of Celan's poems Michael Hamburger shows how intimately breathing and writing were intertwined for Celan, for whom 'the movement

³⁷ The implications of this disappearance for the contemporary 'life' of performing music under the reproductive operations of techno-representation are considered at much greater length in the final section of this collection.

of his poem had come to be governed by breath units rather than metrical or syntactical units.³⁸

The vitality of breath to writing is pointed to in complementary terms by Josipovici in a discussion of Beckett:

‘What lives in us is less a history or a set of memories than a certain rhythm, which, in the end, may be simply the rhythm of our own breathing. Curiously we can only apprehend that rhythm through another.’³⁹

Whilst we may need to be circumspect about any invocation of ‘expression’ in describing art-making (the putting on the outside of some thing assumed to have been previously on the inside), perhaps, if we follow Josipovici, writing is the ex-pressing, the bodying-forth, the laying-out or –down of the maker’s unique spirational rhythm. Both former and formed in and as the writing, it emerges unbeknownst to the writer, being beyond her/his control, becoming available only in its being read by another (which could be the writer after the event of writing). And beneath Josipovici’s rhythm-breathing we might also glimpse Kristeva’s semiotic chora – our pre-symbolic pulsing drives, orchestrating in their simultaneity this rhythmic becoming. Whatever might come through as inspiration will be partially shaped by the peculiarities of this rhythming. If we are each defined by our own distinctive rhythm, *if we each rhythm differently*, we may need to detach rhythm from conceptions of meter and timing derived from formalised music and traditional poetics, which tend to associate it with the reiteration of relatively fixed patterns. As a marker of the movement of our becoming, this rhythming will indeed be characterised by repetitions but not necessarily ones that rest on or follow some fixed measurable pattern. Rather the being-pulsed-through of the movement, its defining alternations (turns), will be singularly anarchic, a function of the driving chora’s unmappable energy charges. Rhythming here would have to have, to perform as, an inherent openness, for it would be characterised not only and most obviously by continuous changes of ‘tempo’ and weight (the lightness-heaviness of becoming), but also by incessant shifts, breaks, jumps, voids, hesitations, falterings, mistakes, stutterings, hiccups – all those interruptions gathered by Clement under the term ‘syncope’.⁴⁰

While our routine experiences of responses to music, song, dance, and verse encompass the effects of ‘musical’ syncopation, it opens onto qualities and features of all processes characterised by a relation to rhythm, to pulsing. Syncopation is displacement - the disruption of the steady, of the expected patterning. It performs a hiatus by opening a gap that is an aside, a break-out from and suspension of whatever constitutes the ordered rhythm, the expected passage of ‘time’. Thus in relation to breathing Clement makes the point that ‘if the rhythm of respiration is binary,’ then ‘syncope is not’.⁴¹ Yet inspiration, which appears to operate as one phase of breathing’s binary, is characterised in its effects by the syncope. Inspiration includes more than breathing-in; as a charging with air it is simultaneously an expanding inflator, an opening and stretching out of breathing’s possibilities previously unimagined. In this context we might consider Penone’s sculptures of exhaled breath, solid

³⁸ ‘Paul Celan: Selected Poems’, translated by Michael Hamburger, Penguin, London, 1996, p. 26.

³⁹ G. Josipovici, ‘Text and Voice: Essays 1981 - 1991’, Carcanet, Manchester, 1992, p.94.

⁴⁰ Catherine Clement, ‘Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture’, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1994.

⁴¹ Op. cit., p. 8.

Of that which is always beginning over and over.’
 Sometimes the celebrated context (a poem’s motive force) is still, quiet, as in ‘Note on
 Moonlight’ where the poet’s ‘gesture in the dark’ is a response to the
 ‘...warm, wide, weatherless quietude’
 which is ‘active with a power, an inherent life’, that generates,
 ‘Like a cloud cap in the corner of a looking-glass,

A change of colour in the plain poet’s mind,
 Night and silence disturbed by an interior sound,⁴⁹
 In other poems (as in ‘Two Illustrations that the World is what you make of it’⁵⁰) the writer
 responds to his immersion in the elemental flow. Listening to the ‘Constant Disquisition of
 the Wind’, season and atmosphere combine to provoke a transformation,
 ‘
 only the wind
 Seemed large and loud and high and strong.

And as he thought within the thought
 Of the wind, not knowing that that thought
 Was not his thought, nor anyone’s,

The appropriate image of himself,
 So formed, became himself and he breathed
 The breath of another nature as his own,

But only its momentary breath,⁵¹
 The poet ‘finds’ himself swept along by a thought that is neither his nor another’s, but only
 that borne by the wind, and he breathes, if momentarily, another’s breath. Wind, breath and
 self-suspension conspire to draw forth inspiration’s other. And across this group of poems,
 season, light and atmospheric flows generate the spaces for a writing that sites itself in-
 between a ground and a thoughtful self. The poems set up and offer the terms, the words,
 ‘For the outlook that would be right,
 where he would be complete in his unexplained completion.’⁵²
 For each poem attempts to reconstitute the outlook unique to that poem, the view from and in
 which the writer can

‘Recognise his unique and solitary home’⁵³
 The poem is that always temporary dwelling breathed into becoming only as that very
 occasion. In essaying to hold to that in-between ‘ground’ as their precarious home, Stevens’
 poems delicately integrate the felt specifics topicalised with a revelatory address of the
 making process itself. These last poems show Stevens’ unavoidable concern as the
 irreducible conjunction of his thankful acceptance of what ‘inspirations’ offer with his
 continual probing of how this came about. Under the influence of breath, the writing itself
 becomes its own subject. Of course poetry, since its tentative modern origins, in its
 contribution to the constitution of modern ‘experience’, becomes a kind of exemplary case
 among the arts in its embrace of the reflexive turn (Celan’s ‘Meridian’ as a circling around,
 through, and back) as fundamental to its own dynamic.

⁴⁹ Op. cit., pp. 531-532.

⁵⁰ Op. cit., pp. 513-515.

⁵¹ Op. cit., p. 513.

⁵² Op. cit., p. 512.

⁵³ Op. cit., p. 512.

In taking as its task the sounding out of its own (and our?) possibilities for dwelling in language, it inevitably draws us through the conjunctions and disjunctions that define unavoidable but always entirely elusive constituents of our becoming. It draws feeling, sense, and yearning across and through each other, testing them, against both what language makes available and where it breaks down. In this context of performing it is inevitable that poets writing in very different ways will, either occasionally or regularly, unfold originating questions of making. It is not that the inspiration-breathing relation is or should be some kind of dominant theme for making-writing but, rather, that, as the forcing forth of writing that has to turn back upon itself, it will emerge under many guises. Thus sourcing's flow-indebtedness will be hearable-readable through the 'elements' that seem to carry the writing's movement (its being –ferred or –ported), that keep it on the turn. For, under the compulsion of self-address (sometimes to be invoked as 'an other', a 'you', an 'addressable thou' (Celan again...), the writing is the outing, the e-venting, of its being-breathed-through into voice and voiced into text. And, because modern poetry and its afterwords have taken responsibility for trying to find ways to voice the unrepresentable (where prose, held fast by the demands of narrative, almost inevitably condemns itself to living on representation's terms), it inevitably recurs upon 'first' questions: what speaking-writing has to take on in trying to place words and relate words to the writer's being-in-this-place. To 'voice' (and then to translate this voicing into a writing...) how we and things matter-together and -separately, means trying to find, to hold to, to show, to language-out, what is fundamental to the ways we are caught up in things.

Two temporally and temperamentally separated writers, Laura Riding and Paul Auster, show how unrelenting these issues are for writing that takes its own condition, its present-becoming, as its necessary addressable task. Laura Riding ceased writing poetry in the late nineteen-thirties and devoted herself subsequently to contrasting kinds of fiction (short stories, long novels); alongside this writing she was developing a critical project centred on the relation between 'telling' and language. In the period of 'high' modernity she collaborated with Robert Graves on a survey of modern poetry.⁵⁴ Her own poems thus emerged from an intense personal critical address of the relation between poetising and the challenges confronted in 'high' modernism's grapple with its relation to the pre-modern, to an established tradition. In her late preface to a selection of her poems she outlines the 'challenge poetry holds', which for her proved irresolvable and thus provoked her withdrawal from its writing; she asks,

'... what compatibility can there be between the creed offering hope of a way of speaking beyond the ordinary, touching perfection, a complex perfection associable with nothing less complex than truth, and the craft tying the hope to verbal rituals that court sensuousness as if it were the judge of truth? ... If poets strain hard enough they must reach the crisis point at which division between creed and craft reveals itself to be absolute.'⁵⁵

This, of course, states the dilemma of modern practice across the arts because it points to the intractable confrontation between the modern 'creed's' requirement of the 'new', that is, to make something which is a unique response to its present conditions, while nevertheless making this 'new' thing in a way which enables it to be gathered in to 'tradition'. This self-affiliation, which may be in direct tension with the reflexive demand for absolute commitment to the present context of making, is managed, she implies, through recourse (a kind of falling-back-on...) to crafty manipulation of the sensuous, through play with form.

⁵⁴ Laura Riding and Robert Graves, 'A Survey of Modernist Poetry', Carcanet, Manchester, 2002.

⁵⁵ Laura Riding, 'Selected Poems in Five Sets', Faber, London, 1970, p. 12.

The implication is that while performing treats its engagement of the sensuous as a separate (technical) problem of writing, the construction of ‘form’ (pattern, rhythm, metre, and so on) becomes extrinsic, an ‘add-on’, to the originating impulses, the Muse’s offer, of the writing. It is as if, for Riding, poetry was always struggling to reconcile two truths, two paths, and falling between them, condemning itself to failure. For a reader, seduction by the sensualities of the crafted form would get in the way of the poem’s grasp of, its rendition of, its own sourcing. In poetry the necessity of displaying what Riding gathers as this commitment to ‘craft’ did not necessarily require writers to write within extant poetic forms but, rather, to treat the issue of ‘form’ (craft) as separable, as setting a separate challenge of finding and writing out a truth-to-(sensuous)form.

However inventive it might be, skill with the ‘technical’ (craft) would always act as a (for Riding, *the*) limit on creed, whose responsibility in pursuit of the truth of the specific was always *to go to whatever extreme the juxtaposing of language and silence demanded, whatever true speaking (voicing-writing) demanded*. To repeat form(s), to live within existing or even new formal patterns could only serve to make the words conform to the already known. The disjunction pointed to by Riding still partially defines poetic practice as a sustained and institutionally sustainable project, just as also it underlies and shapes the construction of public policies towards, for example, education across the arts. Pedagogically respected and trusted, ‘form’ and the ‘technical’, interpreted through ‘crafts’ (appropriate, media-grounding, ‘methods’ for production) as the acquisition and development of making-skills according to communally agreed rules, offer the means for developing knowledge-based and mediatable programmes (via ‘disciplines’). For the latter can be easily reconciled with the other institutionalised curriculum areas. Situation specific ‘truth’ on the other hand, being about the maker’s debt to the otherness of sourcing (inspiration), and thus being essentially an-archic, presents quite different problems of acceptance and assimilation. Its necessary interruptive disjunction of the ‘empirical truths’ and taken-for-granted assumptions that enable the commonsense flows of everyday life, mark it as both unassimilable by and a continuous source of trouble for institutional regulation.

Riding’s poems gain their distinction precisely from their insistent recurrence on the relation between ‘first’ questions (those that are unassimilable to any knowledge field) and a poem’s source. Though moving across a wide range of themes and ‘surface’ subject matters, they continually open onto their own emergence, their involvement with inspiration as the unboundaryable ‘place’ where air, breath, and words are fused, consumed by the possibilities of the modern project (change – chaos – fate...). Writing in hope, away from tradition’s ‘sames’ (‘Hope makes a stronger half to beauty...’⁵⁶), she understands that, in spite of art’s impotence, for

‘Weakly we write upon
The closing surface of oblivion’⁵⁷

change is essential:

‘But time has knit so hard a crust
That speak and differ now we must’⁵⁸

Exploring what modern practice’s challenge to become other has to take on, her poem ‘The World and I’ shows the paradoxical quality of the task:

This is not exactly what I mean
Any more than the sun is the sun.

⁵⁶ From ‘Doom in Bloom’ in op. cit., p. 83.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

But how to mean more closely
If the sun shines but approximately?’⁵⁹

Taking the initial ‘This’ as the poem’s self-referential denial of exactness as a statement about its essential task, we can recognise here an offer of the unavoidable ‘subject matter’ of modernity across the arts - what they all confront where ‘world’ itself (and thus all becoming ‘within’ it) is already constructed for and by us as an essentially calculative project that would seek to measure everything, even those aspects of our becoming which forever escape precision and placement. This is the unboundaryable tension returned to again and again by Pessoa in ‘The Book of Disquiet’⁶⁰ through the terms of the ‘obscure’ and the ‘vague’. If, in spite of all precision tools, the unapproachable sun can only shine ‘approximately’ then, as the poem hints, other kinds of words, of telling, are called for. For that in-between which the arts seek to enter, where strangers, the artist, and the world might hope for some kind of meeting, where each can only be,

‘ ... nearly sure
Each of each’ is,
‘ exactly where
Exactly and exactly the world
Fail to meet by a moment, and a word.’⁶¹

Since modernity, and still, art haunts, tries to survive in, this essential gap.

Writing in search for her, for an, ‘I’, as in ‘Disclaimer of Person’⁶², in and as a poem’s words (‘If this be I... If I my words am’), Riding shows the writing, the poem itself, as a ‘taut community

Wherein enigma’s orb is word-constrained.’⁶³

The entangling and disentangling of the poet’s quest with and from thought (‘suspicion...’ ‘brain-rote...’ ‘reason...’ ‘laws of circumspection...’) not only takes on the atmospherics within which suspicion is immersed but shows the poet’s way out:

‘Into the sceptic fog that mists
Infraction from the chronic rule
Stumbles intelligence a-rage
To find the unthought wanton thought
And, self-confounding, think it.’⁶⁴

Making is driven on in a fusion of thought and passion (‘intelligence a-rage’). And in ‘Tree-Sense’, which we might take as poetry’s sense, a sense of another order to the sense of heaven (God) and hell (the city, the devil), the tree (poem), linking death and sky, stands ‘(I)magining and motionless’.⁶⁵ The poem’s voice, muffled in its slow branches, implicates breathing with a different time, a time outside, a different kind of truth:

‘To be a breath outside time’s lungs –
Uncalendared soft truth still.’⁶⁶

In ‘The Way of the Air’ air is the medium of hope caught up with an atmospherics that shapes the poem’s emergence:

‘The way of the air is by clouds so to speak

⁵⁹ op. cit., p. 56.

⁶⁰ Fernando Pessoa, op. cit.

⁶¹ op. cit., p. 56.

⁶² op. cit., pp. 80-83.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ op. cit., p. 81.

⁶⁵ Op. cit., p. 78.

⁶⁶ op. cit., p. 79.

The air is freedom to hope.
You breathe your hopes,

The air opens your mouth, the clouds unshape it.⁶⁷

Riding often takes this way of air through the wind's play. Integral to inspiration, the wind's vagrant ways, its wind-ings, wind through the doing of writings; we are reminded that inspiration is outside time as we conventionally measure it:

'The wind has at last got into the clock –
Every minute for itself.

It's as late as early.⁶⁸

Time becomes 'a landscape'. Addressing the words of the poem itself ('You lone survivors on paper') the poem asks (itself) whether, through the invocation of breath, it is repeatable without alteration. Can it be

'The script not altered by a breath
Of perhaps meaning otherwise?'⁶⁹

And when thought looks 'out on thought' as, in 'Opening of Eyes',⁷⁰ it is implied, is the way of poetry, then with luck, 'As if by charm' (hinting at the muse's sourcing),

'From mouths spring forth vocabularies.'⁷¹

Addressing poetry's hope for a poem that reaches a 'secretness' and offers,

'thought not divided, thinking
A single whole of seeing...'

this poem shows that this 'secretness' can emerge,

'
suddenly
While mouthless lips break open
Mutely astonished to rehearse
The unutterable simple verse.'⁷²

This reminds us, perhaps, of Rilke's experience of the delivery of his 'Sonnets to Orpheus' when he, as receiver, was transported by their apparent near verbatim arrival. Riding's 'secretness' guides us toward what it might be about the relationship between poet, words, and things, that is unavoidable – repeatedly, directly or indirectly, she confronts words with the '-ness' of things, their qualitative condition of becoming, of persisting. In 'The Wind Suffers'⁷³ this '-ness' is offered as a suffering. Wherever '-ness' can be attached to something it marks essential suffering: '...I of my whoness', along with stone, light, birds (and so on, the poem implies), suffer in and as their essential quality. The 'cure' offered by the poem is a kind of homeopathic remedy, a *pharmakon*, that is more of the same. 'By the same knowing poison', by, in the case of the 'pain-world', an 'improved anguish'. This improvement, the poem seems to suggest, this heightening of the experience of the thing, is precisely poetry's task.

⁶⁷ Op. cit., p. 75.

⁶⁸ Op. cit., pp. 65-66.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Op. cit., p. 52.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Op. cit., p. 53.

⁷³ Op. cit., p. 43.

That it is ‘whoness’ for the ‘I’ and ‘whatness’ for things, which poetry plunges into, is confirmed in both ‘The Quids’⁷⁴ and ‘All Nothing, Nothing’⁷⁵, where Riding seems to anticipate what Nathalie Sarraute later opened out as her writing terrain under the word ‘tropisms’⁷⁶ – all those little forces, drives, pulsions, ‘below’ our ‘surfaces’ that set each of us in motion on our always unique and specific ways. In ‘Quids’ their ‘commotion’ as ‘metaphysical acrobats’, their turning in on themselves, caused the ‘one’ the ‘Monoton’ within which they performed to feel itself ‘...differently the same / In its different parts.’⁷⁷ In ‘All Nothing, Nothing’ it is the body in constant (e)motion, as the embodiment of a kind of repertory of seemingly autonomous tics. This commotion, which is both ‘stirring’ and ‘standstill’, is ‘without significance /

Or indeed further sense
Than going or returning
Within one inch,
Than rising and falling,
Within one breath,⁷⁸

But, as Riding shows elsewhere, it is this rising and falling, which is the scene of inspiration itself whose always unpredictable dynamic is writing’s possibility. The plea for its violent interruption in ‘In Nineteen Twenty-Seven’ is made thus:

‘Oh, let me be choked ceremoniously
With breath and language, if I will,
And make a seemly world of it,⁷⁹

And we recognise from her other writings that such breathing is always caught up in the chaos of atmospherics, especially in and by the wind, which, for Riding is seemingly the least understandable of the elements. Metaphorising inspiration in ‘The Why of the Wind’ the poem makes the wind a mind-infecting force whose inexplicable logic effects a ‘massacre of thought’.⁸⁰ Surrendering to the ‘enormous wind / Against our learned littleness’, we are lost to ourselves:

‘When the wind runs we run with it.
We cannot understand because we are not
When the wind takes our mind.’⁸¹

Whatever else it may be for Riding, inspiration, what interruptively opens up making and bends it on its way, has nothing to do with some (Heideggerian? High-mountain?) supposedly pure air. It is always dependent on very local and absolutely specific but always ungraspable, because only ever approximate, conditions. And if this is central to modernity’s bequest it seems pressingly prescient under the blinding lights of contemporary representation.

Paul Auster, though perhaps better known for his novels, has assembled in his poems fragments of a post-Beckettian ‘scape, a ‘-stead’, where the writer affiliates words that still hold themselves aloof, apart. We do not know whether the writing offers some kind of discomfitting temporary dwelling spot or is a putting outside, an out-stead, the other side of what and how we live in our routine inter-relating of language and things. In this ‘over-there’ he broaches what the breathing necessary for survival, what the wait for inspiration, come up

⁷⁴ Op. cit., p. 46.

⁷⁵ Op. cit., pp. 53-55.

⁷⁶ Nathalie Sarraute, ‘Tropisms and The Age of Suspicion’, John Calder, London, 1963.

⁷⁷ Op. cit., p. 47.

⁷⁸ Op. cit., p. 55.

⁷⁹ Op. cit., p. 38.

⁸⁰ Op. cit., p. 23.

⁸¹ Ibid.

against and have to take on and make their way through. The poems show the terms of the writer's task. For writing has, in 'Facing the Music', to face the juncture,

'where the air and the earth erupt
in this profusion of chance, the random
forces of our own lack
of knowing what it is
we see, and merely to speak of it
is to see
how words fail us, how nothing comes right
in the saying of it...' ⁸²

The poet is left only with the desire that the 'you' to whom the poem is addressed might 'feel this word / that has lived inside me... / this desire for nothing / but the day itself.' ⁸³ It is as if the word might carry over only a trace, not of what it names, but of what it has had to go through to end up on the page. Perhaps this is what Riding might see as its suffering. And in 'Aubade', taking the poem's 'I' as referring to the poem we are reading, the place where the poem might make out is a not-here, an opening in a wall,

'that opens to the wind
and its stammering, storm
in the plural - ...' ⁸⁴

Beyond 'the seam' it makes in the wall the poem is only a remnant, 'as air'; it is a place 'before breath' where 'we feel our shadows cross.' ⁸⁵ Somehow the poem has arrived over here in advance of a breath to come. And the wind's 'stammering' is perhaps also the being-stammered out, the syncopated rhythming forth, of the poem itself. ⁸⁶ The difficulty of fixing or realising the relation between breath and words has been shown in an earlier poem, 'Interior', where the stifling of breath paradoxically offers itself through the poem's concluding words. Taking us through the sound of words via a 'voice that speaks to me / only of smallest things' but only as their names, the poem's 'I' (and the poem itself) is drawn to a paradoxical conclusion; this 'I' comes into its own through a breath-stifling silent word:

'In the impossibility of words,
in the unspoken word
that asphyxiates,
I find myself.' ⁸⁷

A sequence of seven short poems, 'Disappearances', shapes a circular motion, a meridian perhaps, in which a 'he is' beginning, is always a breathed repetition, that is both

'as if it were the last time
that he would breathe,'

and,

that he breathes for the first time
beyond the grasp
of the singular.' ⁸⁸

In this sequence and across his poems Auster's interrelating of 'fundamental' things and processes (earth, atmosphere, season, stones, bones, flesh, blood) explores, tests, the

⁸² Paul Auster, 'Selected Poems', Faber, London, 1998, p. 100.

⁸³ Op. cit., p. 101.

⁸⁴ Op. cit., p. 75.

⁸⁵ Op. cit., p. 76.

⁸⁶ Making's relation to stammering, making-as-stammering, is explored at greater length in the final chapter's consideration of the intertwining of music and voice.

⁸⁷ Op. cit., p. 31.

⁸⁸ Op. cit., p. 61.

suffusing mediations of eye and word. These generate meditations on states and processes of our becoming that ‘are’ only in their recession, their elusiveness. They echo Riding’s recurrence on ‘-ness’ conditions, precisely so in ‘Late Summer’ where, despite concluding that,

‘There is no promised land’
the poem invokes breathing at the edge to perform a celebration of ‘lessness’:
‘As if we could hold a single breath
to the limit of breath.’⁸⁹

The voice that reaches out for this limit, for the region where the matters of the body and the earth are conjoined with and come up against their disappearance, is rehearsed repeatedly in another sequence, ‘Unearth’. Voiced differently through I, me, you, we, us, no-one, the poems’ subjects are caught up, as are their words, by atmospheric vagaries. Not only is air the possibility of becoming and poetising but we, as the poems’ addressees, are the effects of its all too real conditions. Thus ‘you’ and ‘I’ are,

‘Wind-spewn, from the radiant
no, and grafted on
the brown-green scar of this
moment.’⁹⁰

And, offering an ‘I’ that might be anyone’s, everyone’s, but is particularly the ‘I’ voicing-writing the poem as would-be-art-thing,

‘... I am the air’s
stammered relic.’⁹¹

In trying to resonate, to voice-write, that upon which words, dying words, are dependent when they reach for their own edges, for how they fall away, the poems draw us inexorably into their own falling short. And they do this in the face of their absorption by life-and-death-defining inexplicables. They perform a celebration of what we might be left with when we, through our words, come up against these ineffables. The poems open the possibility of drawing their performative concerns across the other sites and media of art-making.

Perhaps these writers and their excerpted poems can show us how any invocation or recognition of inspiration as intrinsic to art-making immediately confronts us with fundamental questions about our relation to the arts and their things. For does not ‘inspiration’ confound analysis? Does not any acknowledgment of its ‘presence’ in, its contribution to, performing’s processes, challenge any attempt to generate a grounded (a disciplined, methodologically certifiable (and thus institutionally acceptable)) knowledge of making and its things? If, as is largely the case with commonsense, we treat knowledge-projects as, at least in part, the generation of empirical ‘mimetic’ reports on ‘the real’, on what has ‘really happened’, then any invocation of inspiration’s part in art will confront knowledge-production with its own limits. It might even persuade such productive work to turn back upon itself and reassess both its ‘point’ and its limits. If inspiration, as a possible muse-guided sourcing, is precisely and by definition, what cannot be accounted for, and yet it is what makes all the difference in the world both between art-things and between art- and not-art-things, *then in its effects it is devastating*. For what it does is to make the art-gest perform the offer of a different relation to the world, to becoming, to our being-together, a relation that, in and as its differentiating, challenges all interpretive work (analytic, critical, descriptive, informative and so on) to become other, to suspend and transform itself. It shows that all our ‘cultural’, languaged, relations to the sourcing flows, are always enforced

⁸⁹ Op. cit., p. 55.

⁹⁰ Op. cit., X, p. 16.

⁹¹ Op. cit., XVI, p. 22.

translations into some kind of language of processes and ‘things’ that remain ineffable.⁹² And we are condemned to enculture these flows, both within art and everyday life, through our multi-media languages whose very condition is an excising and re-assembling that cuts its topics into framable and sequenced bits. In their eternal ‘meanwhile’, the flows remain absolutely elsewhere, both beyond yet passing right through us. If it is to make it into something like a ‘language’, every gest-for-art resigns itself at the outset to its inevitable failure, its falling short of and away from the flows that set it off and drive it on.

Thus, to approach performing from the ‘side’ of its gests’ reception, to accept its general suffusion by those processes gathered under ‘inspiration’ (occulting processes either aside from reason or bringing reason or commingling with and distracting reason in the poem’s (gest’s) course⁹³), would seem to require all interpretation to own up to, to declare, its own limits and interests from the beginning. Responsive writing/discoursing, whatever its interested or disciplinary source, would surely have to recognise that, when it comes to responding to art, it would have to suspend any knowledge claims, for performing’s gests are ‘about’ the self-exposure of that which is other to reason’s ways. Or, at the least, it would need to acknowledge that its knowledge-offerings were revelations first and last of its own assumptions and the constitutive work they generated: no more mimesis or assumed correspondence, only an unknowable relation between conceptualising and the referents of its ‘objects of knowledge’.

Summoned to Withdraw from Representation

Thus, in opening up and onto the extremity of art’s self-differentiation, inspiration confronts us with stark choices. For it shows us that trusting ourselves to art’s difference necessitates a radical movement of our ‘becoming’, entailing a suspension and displacement that are simultaneously matched by a substitution. To be with, in, an art-gest is to be transferred, unselfed, into an elsewhere that is no longer definable through the space-time coordinates constituting commonsense’s passage. However brief and faltering this substitution, it is an exit from commonsense and an immersion into a qualitatively different condition whose features are incommensurable with it. This elsewhere is both obscure (immeasurable and unboundaried) and utterly specific (tied absolutely to the provoking thing and the context of its being experienced). To be plunged into this other-condition is to be thrown into relating differently, where relating is the permanent risky tension that holds us together (with ourselves, others, things, world and language).

Precisely because this other-conditioning is irreconcilable with commonsense it cannot be held to account by the latter’s rationalities. On each occasion of its being zoned as image/text/sound/action/thing in whatever combination, it is set up and sent forth in order to perform art’s difference as just this thing, to be, to activate, the specificity of the experiences it provokes. Simultaneously literal and metaphoric, it is what enables this indeterminacy, this drifting free-play in-between and aside from the polarities (identities and dialectics) of

⁹² I explore performing’s specific relation to translation subsequently (see the chapter ‘To Gest’) through almost-transliteration.

⁹³ Perhaps the recondite lyric of J.H. Prynne’s poetry shows that breathing (spiration) is a *poiesis*-defining challenge. For in his poems multiple ‘voices’, including those drawn from specific knowledge-discourses, are often commingled with performing’s voice in ways that may, withdrawing them from their conceptual frames, reconvene them in the elsewhere of *poiesis* – knowledges brought to matter on performing’s terms. See, for example, John Wilkinson’s partial gloss on Prynne’s ‘Word Order’ sequence in which he shows the ‘matter’ of breath(ing) to be an explicit and recurrent presence: John Wilkinson, ‘Heigh Ho: A Partial Gloss of *Word Order*’, in ‘Glossator’, volume 2, ed., R. Dobran, Brooklyn College, New York, 2010, pp. 295 – 325, and esp. the discussion at 311-312.

everyday life. Beyond reason by way of inspiration, it does not put itself into some dialectical relation of negation to commonsense, but performs a drifting-off in which the languages it haunts (and which haunt it...) – verbal-textual, visual, aural-oral, tactile and so on – are given an utterly different life; in the languages of the arts one lives as several, becomes differently and on the outside of all measuring-placing categories. Such displaced living (a ‘living’ exiling itself from the only ‘life’ that it knows), in its falling under the spell of outsideness, out-lives living as we ‘know’ it and live it routinely.

If we come to art as this out-living, we might approach it as a ‘reserve’, a zone of withdrawing made by the things in the hope that, even under representation, where the self-culturing state draws everything to itself, something of its offer will remain forever withdrawn, stateless. But to approach performing and its gests in this way, whether as maker or responder, calls for, as an echo of inspiration’s summons, strange and estranging kinds of attention and absorption. For, to get anywhere proximate to art’s pledged elsewhere, one has to turn inside out and upside down one’s relation to languaging. This is the previously mentioned turn alluded to by Celan in his ‘Meridian’ essay in which the ‘oblivious self’ moves ‘into the uncanny and strange to free itself.’⁹⁴ Tracing Buchner’s (and art’s and his own) concerns, Celan finds the perception of language ‘as a physical shape’ and as ‘breath, that is, direction and destiny’,⁹⁵ and especially so when offered through the character of Lucile as ‘tangible and like a person’.⁹⁶ But this shape, seen through the ‘Lenz’ of Buchner’s *Lenz* fragment, who, in his occupation with art and for the sake of the liberation which art can bring, forgets about himself, can only be reached in its strangeness by a crucial turning step, in effect, a flip. For,

‘... a man who walks on his head sees the sky below as an abyss.’⁹⁷

From this utterly disconnected ‘position’ the poem is turned out as ‘one person’s language become shape’, and is on the way, it shapes the way (a meridian) towards an encounter in the ‘free space’ on ‘its own margins’.⁹⁸ And the movings gathered under inspiration (the call, the summons, the offering...) that turn the world around and the self out in the very unpredictability of their suddenness, are effected at a speed beyond what we take speeding to be in everyday life and technoscience. Inspiration’s, discharge’s, movement is not merely very fast, but absolute, seemingly immediate: it precedes, in advance of any actual speed, the conversion of the world into a world-of-and-for-art, occurs in no time at all, less than a flash – hence the amazement, the shock-joy of the delivery from no-where that floods and re-shapes at a speed outstripping every machine. It leaves the electronic speeds of the silicon chip, the semi-conductor, in the starting block. In this transformation, effected by a split in which something else entirely breaks through instantly, some one’s relation to becoming, and thus whatever language performing turns toward, is re-planed and sent off differently. And each singular re-shaping of language necessarily finds itself enwrapped, enfolded and rapt, in and by the fusion of inspiration and air-full atmospherics. Irrespective of whether air, breath, season, or atmospherics are figured explicitly as constituents (as in the poems consulted earlier), each gest’s ‘content’ is a rendering of their transformational effects. What pumps the thing into becoming the pulsing which shapes the languaging of its ‘content’ is inspiration’s inflecting and co-opting of maker and context as it passes through and away. No ‘content’ can be extracted from this shaping (as if it were independent of it), in which the categorical distinctions and polarities of the rhetorical strategies of aesthetic discourse (analysis and

⁹⁴ Op. cit., p. 44.

⁹⁵ Op. cit., p. 39.

⁹⁶ Op. cit., p. 40.

⁹⁷ Op. cit., p. 46.

⁹⁸ Op. cit., p. 49.

critique) are collapsed in favour of a core re-fashioning of language that takes it somewhere else entirely.

Of course, under the rule of representation performing and its gesticulations are subject to continual forceful authoritative appropriation by interested projects whose point is to create worlds of meaning. Through this transforming work the things are brought back into commonsense, placed and made 'meaningful' according to everyday rationalities. And under representation's calculative drive the rationalities and rhetorics of an ever-expanding range of analytic practices routinely penetrate commonsense as unquestioned resources for sense-making. Unable to escape such appropriation the arts are drawn into endless tactical engagements as part of their attempts to sustain their own daily life-in-difference. To get to, to set up, maintain and try to protect, the 'reserve' requires continual coming-and-going between it and the culture's identifying and framing sites. In the face of the latter's all-consuming drive to typify and generalise, the arts' struggle is always to hold on at all costs to some fragments of their things' specificity, of their content-beyond-category. And it is reliance on 'the other voice', the summons, however sensed, that partially generates and is crucial to this specificity. Without the split before all speed and the unbidden that seeps through the split there would be no art-things. But being-summoned is context-bound. What comes through as an elsewhere-offer always emerges amidst the specific conditions of the maker's life-world. It thus bursts through as something provoking shifts in the maker's relations; immediately it generates and is a re-constituent of a maker's dialogues with the things and others of the making-context (life!).

If, as suggested, each gesticulation's 'content' is manifested in and as the singular shaping of its language, as a sensed-felt response to the pressing particulars of the maker's life(-context) – the unique coursing of their becoming – then the passional qualities of this felt and sensed relation to the world will suffuse, be inseparable from, the shaping activities. A summoning-driving, something like a muse, is invariably involved at the meeting between the complex of multiple fragments of passionately thoughtful desiring (the unreasonable commitment to make one's way through art) and the eruption of the other voice, the instant suffusion by a flow from an outside-within. Without needing to fall back into characterological typing, perhaps it will be sufficient to note the extraordinary range of 'feeling', 'moods', and 'thoughts' (from profound desolation and negativity, through gentle/savage irony, humour, serene calm, to searing joy (and so on and on...) congealed in the gesticulations. It is these which inflect their offer through the ways they make themselves felt in the gesticulations' self-shaping. Whatever the qualities of the thought-feelings that they embed, the very 'fact' of their being done (the maker's performance) in art's name and as a pledge to and for it, that is, how the shaping is effected, will embody, remembering Bloch's 'hope principle', art as a site of hope (even if only of hope for art and perhaps for art as our last hope...). If the arts offer such a reservoir of extraordinarily diverse hopeful passions then differences in makers' attribution of sourcing (responsibility for what, splitting one open, pours through) to some kind of 'mused' provocation may be crucial for the kinds and qualities of the things that emerge from performing. For the point of every content's specificity, its being language-shaped, is to show art as the distilling-compounding-fragmenting of life as impassioned. In trying to perform this only for itself on its own terms it may just do it too, here and there, for we others, but only if, absorbed, distracted, we turn ourselves inside out through the shaped content.

But if each thing's impassioned trajectory is muse-inflected, then it is the very diversity of the muse-figures invoked and acknowledged that ensures the play of multiple passions across the arts. This is hardly surprising, given that art's project is precisely the showing of its

difference through the passionate differentiation that each art-thing seeks to manifest. This is why we must avoid hypostasising muse-indebtedness through the definite article. Or at least, when the definite article is attached, we should perhaps hear it as reserved for the muse specific to that one thing: every muse to its own thing or part-thing – different, however slightly, each time. It might then seem that Akhmatova’s address of the muse in the cited poem is paradoxical for, at the poem’s conclusion, the muse affirms that it was she who dictated the ‘Inferno’ to Dante. Yet the poem is tantalisingly ambivalent for it leaves us absolutely uncertain as to whether this ‘pitiless’ muse staring Anna Akhmatova down has come to say anything other than ‘yes’ to her.

As a contrast the American poet Robert Duncan, whose poems in part constitute a continuous vital dialogue with his own writing practice, frequently invokes muse figures in diverse forms. This supports the contention that each art-thing (here, poems) is peculiar to context in both source and content. But while, for the most part, his muse figure, following the classical model, is female,⁹⁹ in ‘The Torso Passages 18’ Duncan celebrates a radical gender switch in his muse when he acknowledges that

‘... my Other is not a woman but a man’¹⁰⁰

Of course makers may indeed experience consistencies and continuities in the ways they are overtaken by ‘other voices’. Yet the point of their split is to source differences. Consistencies are, perhaps, a result of what the maker brings to the split and the flow. Every offer comes to a situated formed she or he whose passions for art, melded with the terms of everyday life, will already be in the grip of certain rigidities, habits, and patterns. It is these that have to be confronted and perhaps suspended, retracted or re-shaped in the dark light of the always unprecedented terms of an ‘other voice’. Indeed, how the awaited eruptions are named, characterised and responded to can sensitise us to the troubles and anxieties of making, especially when the wait goes unrewarded.

Sourcings can bring both immediate satisfactions and irresolvable provocations that may be enhanced, or exacerbated, by conditions defining a maker’s relation to self and context. This is made explicit in Robert Lowell’s remarks about his own problems of reconciling living and writing:

‘Depression’s no gift from the Muse. At worst I do nothing.’¹⁰¹

Within the necessary vagueness of ‘inspiration’ very different attributions can be made as to the ‘character’ of the source. There can be no assumption of unequivocal benignity, as Akhmatova shows in her description of the Muse as serene and pitiless, thus affirming the Muse’s distance from the ‘human’ (empathy, pity, love...). And inspiration can be experienced as demonic where the sourcing seems to have unavoidably troubling qualities. William Gaddis shows this in his ‘Agapē Agape’¹⁰², where the near delirious dying narrator intertwines his own fragmented meditations on the relation between the machine, entertainment and creativity (art) with scraps from and anecdotes about other writers. Commenting on Turgenev’s relation to Tolstoy, he speaks of being tormented by ‘...some monstrous, some detachable self, some dangerous demon not really part of you since you can’t control it but can force you to do things...’¹⁰³ Later, musing on Svengali’s creation of

⁹⁹ Robert Duncan, ‘Selected Poems’, Carcanet, Manchester, 1993. See particularly ‘The Structure of Rime 1’, ‘After Reading H. D.’s “Hermetic Definitions”, 3’, and ‘Tribal Memories – Passages/’, pp. 45, 74, 78.

¹⁰⁰ Op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in ‘Robert Lowell’s Poems: A Selection.’, ed. by J. Raban, Faber, London, 1974, p. 25.

¹⁰² William Gaddis, ‘Agapē Agape’, Atlantic, London, 2002.

¹⁰³ Op. cit., p. 66.

an other singing with his voice, he recalls Michelangelo's lament, 'O Dio, o Dio, who has taken the one closest to me who could do more ... more mighty than I ... tore me away from myself...' ¹⁰⁴ and '... the only refuge from the hallucination that's everything out there...' ¹⁰⁵ (where the 'everything' 'hallucination' maybe taken as the now englobing flow of representation - the info-spectacle). Echoing Michelangelo, the fading narrator, haunted by his body's failure and his waned creative powers, ends by identifying this 'self who can do more' with Youth 'with its reckless exuberance when all things were possible ... that Youth who could do anything', pursued, we presume, to extinction by Age. ¹⁰⁶ In exceeding the 'I', turning it out of itself, Gaddis thus offers us an ambiguous sourcing figure, at once both demonic, monstrous, and a transfigurer of one's creative possibilities.

The calls of the mysterious voices, pointed to by Levinas in the excerpt heading this chapter, can indeed be demonic. Current usage extends this sense of the supernatural in the demonic and inflects it with hints of malignancy and evil, especially in relation to states of presumed 'possession'. Exploring Blanchot's fiction Levinas includes this possibility when, in a consideration of 'poetic production', he contrasts the part of the intellect ('inalienable') with the 'best part, that of genius, the demon, the muse, the unconscious.' ¹⁰⁷ We might expect that the demonic would be radically destructive, disintegrative, but what art's things offer us is invariably formed as on the way to a pre-coherence, as the tensed conjunction of differences. Whatever the 'raw' summoning 'voices' delivered is then figured in and as the emerging gestures through makers' language-shaping performances. Irreconcilable with commonsense (though sharing some of its means – structuring, grammar, repetition, imaging and so on), the things of art establish their own terms for hanging together. Superficially, because of this inner directed coherence, they may seem much like the commonsense things. And this, of course, is commonsense's problem in coming to terms with art's things. It is set up to find its own sense in everything upon which it concentrates its knowing resources; the latter constitute the machinery for making-meaning-full. Yet, if art's point, how it projects itself, is, as has been proposed earlier, its self-differentiating otherness, then perhaps the performing of this differentiation is, from the standpoint of commonsense, precisely demonic. It is where possession, or what Levinas calls in passing 'foreign interference' ¹⁰⁸, cuts itself off from commonsense with disastrous, though largely unrecognised, consequences for the latter. For, while appearing to accept some of the same or similar 'urges' to commonsense, generating things manifesting some partial inner coherence through continuities and consistencies, they remain absolutely incommensurable. Hence the confusion, the trouble, they often cause. Their very projecting performs an ontological-epistemological break; bearing many of the characteristics of the at-hand, the familiar, they nevertheless take themselves radically elsewhere.

Responding to an interviewer's question about his writing process, Harold Pinter points to both the scission and the continuities which, smuggled across the break, are such a challenge to commonsense's desire to place things and make them meaningful on its own terms. Invoking the 'unconscious', rather than a muse figure, he describes a relation to it close to possession, in which he is dictated to by, and becomes the scribe for, voices and characters over which he has no control. As character-ful voices speaking coherently they are partially continuous with the interpretive procedures of commonsense. Yet their absolute

¹⁰⁴ Op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁰⁵ Op. cit., p. 96

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁰⁸ Op. cit., p. 140.

independence is their virtue, their pledge of art's possibility. For, in the way they shape this control lies the promise, the being-formed, of the specific difference (beyond ontology and epistemology) of the (art-)thing-to-come. Asked if there is a conscious part of him organising the action and characters, Pinter says,

'I'm not aware of my consciousness working in that way at an early stage of my writing ... one of the most exciting things about being a writer is finding the life in different characters whom you don't know at all. To a certain extent you've got to let them live their own life. But there's also a conflict constantly going on between you as the Writer and them as the characters. Who's in charge? There's no answer to that.'¹⁰⁹

Asked about Ruth in 'The Homecoming', he replies,

'I really didn't know what was going to happen, where she, or the play was going ... Gradually the play grew and dictated itself partly through her actions ... This may sound rubbish but I simply couldn't get out of her way. She started to dominate the play in a way I hadn't expected. She was unavoidable.'¹¹⁰

Whilst he subsequently worked 'very hard on the text', his acknowledgment of being dictated to and dominated by the unexpected and, above all, the unavoidable, bears witness to art's alien sourcing.

Commonsense can only maintain itself by trying to gather this alien-becoming to its self-rooted convictions and interpretive habits. Somehow the scission and what is delivered through it has to be sealed off, sutured and hidden through a virtual plastic surgery; it has to be treated as reconcilable with its established sensing, knowing, valuing modes. Thus the very appearance of gests' partial inner coherence ensures that they surface in the culture as largely unrecognised under-cover agents. For in the ways they appear, how they perform their surfacing, they seem ('appear') to share key characteristics of commonsense processes. In this way they perform a lying-in-wait for moments which may never come, when their foreign agency can be taken for what it has always been, though unbeknownst. The chances of their release into and for themselves recede rapidly in proportion to the extent of their appropriation and placement by the institutionally certified texts of the representing machinery. For the latter the demonic is indeed the threat of an elsewhere outside its control. And one thing that the arts of modernity and its afterward share is their weakness, their abjection in the face of take-overs.

In contemporary music-making the absolute reliance on complex social arrangements for the 'delivery' of musical performances largely separates composition (jazz excepted) from the conditions in which compositions are offered. The relation between sourcing and event is complexified through the necessary intervention of interpreters whose intimate knowledge of the composer's musical language is a pre-requisite. Many diverse sourcings thus contribute to the performance, whether live or recorded, made available to listeners. Whatever the composer's relation to inspirational sources the real conditions imposed by the music-producing machinery will have effects throughout the composing process (availability of performers, performance venues, and so on). The composer Jonathan Harvey restricts his investigation of inspiration in music to the relations between composers' own understandings of source and the social context of composition.¹¹¹ In his detailed review of composers'

¹⁰⁹ Harold Pinter quoted in 'The Guardian', 14.03.'06, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ See Jonathan Harvey, 'Music and Inspiration', Faber, London, 1999.

writings he comments on the role of a muse figure for a range of composers. Exploring the relation between the gendered muse-archetype he finds several composers attributing muse-like status to specific individuals. As sources for feelings these others may be cited as provoking particular compositions as well as composing generally. Whether as actual lovers, male or female, or as idealised figures, some composers accounted for the emergence and flow of their musical 'ideas' through such others. Of course the relation between such figures and the actual material sounding through to the composer from the other 'voice' remains unspeakable. By addressing the arrival and disappearance of inspiration in the context of the composer's personal experiences Harvey both respects the unbridgable gap between source and context and steers clear of reductivist 'external' explanations. Yet his emphasis on context moves much of his interpretation closer to a study of influences, of the things composers cite as important to them in the composition process, than, as explored here, to inspiration as the ineffable 'forcing' that holds them to music-as-such. Thus composers' conceptions of their potential audiences enter compositional practices in complex ways and are typically bound to their senses of music's relation to 'communication'. Such understandings and valuing of particular influences are often tied to the composers' culturally specific situations and their interpretations of such things as the audiences' musical education, and the uses to which the surrounding culture puts the music. Muse, demon, other voice, remain as elusive as ever. They can be alluded to, named even, but never in ways which allow us to reconcile them with or coopt them, without radical loss, into commonsense. Their darkness insists through its very absence from Harvey's analysis, though his emphasis on cultural context (audience and state...) does share something with a different approach.

Lorca, the *Duende*, and Darkness

It is this darkness of the 'foreign interference' that Federico Garcia Lorca confronts us with. To appreciate both the true obscurity (forever in the dark) and the inherent ambiguity (its ineradicable tensions) of all sourcing, we need to see how the apparent beneficence of a muse will always have been bound up with, will have emerged from and thus be marked by, something like the demonic. The dark of that which is both our beforehand, our hidden accompanist unbeknownst, and our afterward, marks us indelibly but invisibly. And with this darkness, this unseeable wound-stain that is what we live through and by, we edge closer to the disquiet of possession. Art's turn away from the givens of identity and culture is the attempt to catch some fragment of this indelibility in its fleeting and always unpredictable break-outs. But, crucially for Lorca, how this dark-beforehand makes itself felt will be bound to the visceral legacy of the writer's, the artist's, own culture, and especially, it seems, the feelings which that culture constantly reinforces for first and last questions. For Lorca the all-shaping legacy of Spanish culture was to be found in its specific sensitivity to death.

In his essay 'Play and Theory of the *Duende*'¹¹² Lorca contrasts what the Spanish name as the '*duende*' with the muse and the 'angel'. Both muse and angel 'come from without', the angel giving 'lights' and the muse giving 'forms'. Through guiding, giving, announcing, and forewarning in an 'atmosphere of predestination' the angel orders, while the muse dictates and sometimes prompts; she may also 'awaken the intelligence'. But this latter is not necessarily a value as 'intelligence is often the enemy of poetry because it limits too much.'¹¹³ Both seem to require acceptance. For Lorca, however, 'spontaneous creation' has

¹¹² See Federico Garcia Lorca, 'Deep Song and Other Prose', New Directions, New York, 1980, pp. 42-53. I am indebted to the artist Juan Cruz for opening my way to the '*Duende*'.

¹¹³ Op. cit., p. 44.

to be sought elsewhere, an elsewhere that is paradoxically much closer and requires not acceptance but something utterly different:

‘... one must awaken the *duende* in the remotest mansions of the blood ... The true fight is with the *duende*.’¹¹⁴

Something to be both sought and contended with, something that may already possess one, the *duende*, across the arts in Spain, is a ‘power, not a work; it is a struggle not a thought.’¹¹⁵ And, whatever the medium through which it makes itself felt, it is identified as ‘black’. Seemingly pre-cultural, this sanguineous force, in stark contrast to muse and angel, has to be fought for:

‘... he burns the blood like a poultice of broken glass, ... he exhausts, ... he rejects all the sweet geometry we have learned, he smashes styles ...’¹¹⁶

The *duende*’s very en-sanguined corporeal coursing-through – its ‘mysterious power which everyone senses and no philosopher explains’¹¹⁷ – being-before-language, is its blackness, a blackness that forces its way out in the course of the struggle, that infects and shapes the performer’s song, dance, image, text, event, whatever-thing. It is what, for example, ‘makes Goya (master of the grays, silvers, and pinks of the best English painting) work with his fists and his knees in horrible bitumen.’¹¹⁸ In its Dionysian trajectory it works its dark way through as a transformer provoking a ‘change in forms’, and bringing ‘to old planes unknown feelings of freshness.’¹¹⁹ Forcing through its transformations it evades cultural conventions, for the *duende* ‘can never repeat himself.’¹²⁰ It generates ‘a real and poetic evasion of this world.’¹²¹ While, in Spain, a ‘country open to death’, the *duende*’s power, its ‘black sound’, is experienced most explicitly in the arts of the living body – music, dance, spoken poetry – nevertheless, Lorca argues, each art and country is ‘capable of *duende*.’¹²² The experience of the ‘black’ is specific to context, to how each culture has set up the relations between its arts and the suffering body, the body at the edge of culture:

‘With idea, sound, or gesture, the *duende* enjoys fighting the creator on the very rim of the well. Angel and muse escape with violin and compass; the *duende* wounds. In the healing of that wound, which never closes, lies the invented, strange quality of a man’s worth.’¹²³

Thus, unavoidably, the body in its earthly dependence is thrust, through the *duende* as the ‘black spirit of the earth’,¹²⁴ to the forefront of making. For Lorca the latter becomes as much a site of struggle as of joyful celebration. He turns it into a volatile zone of disturbance. The seeming smoothness of the muse’s and the angel’s grant, the pouring forth of touched speech, gives way to irresolvable tensions of which the gests become the complex residues, irrespective of which progenitor (muse, angel, demon-*duende*) seems to emerge as prime provider in a specific performing. Inspiration is no longer (it never was...) an unequivocal singular delivery. Each thing made will bear traces, however subliminal, of the wounding struggle. And the thing’s emergence is dependent upon the way that the body is pulsed

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 43.

¹¹⁶ Op. cit., p. 45.

¹¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 43.

¹¹⁸ Op. cit., p. 45.

¹¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 46.

¹²⁰ Op. cit., p. 51.

¹²¹ Op. cit., p. 46.

¹²² Op. cit., p. 47.

¹²³ Op. cit., p. 50.

¹²⁴ Op. cit., p. 43.

through becoming. Further, it seems that air, our condition and pulsed breathing's possibility, is through and through atmospheric, and as such, being bound to and partially defining the specificity of every 'context', it is infinitely variable, effectively chaotic. For Lorca concludes by fusing the *duende*, the dark earthed sourcing, with the wind's enveloping force:

'Where is the *duende*? Through the empty arch comes a wind, a mental wind blowing relentlessly over the heads of the dead, in search of new landscapes and unknown accents; a wind that smells of baby's spittle, crushed grass and jellyfish veil, announcing the constant baptism of newly created things.'¹²⁵

It is no accident that Lorca concludes this *duende* manifesto by entwining the movement of air with an invocation of smell. For smell is not only the least 'theorisable' and theorised of our senses, it is also the one which perhaps directly connects us with the darkness of our creaturely origins, our almost lost power of scent. The *duende* thus reminds us that art's unendable striving to be beyond culture may also entail certain kinds of reversals, return journeys embracing again what we have either lost (our (pre-?)pleistocenian beginnings...¹²⁶), buried or believe we have dispensed with in the course of culture's transformations of our embodied-becoming, only for it to force its way back and out in absolutely unanticipatable ways and shapes through the embodiment-remembrance-language combine. Perhaps, too, this echoes the reversal of evolution Walter Benjamin found in Kafka's many animal-human fusions. Tormented by the blackness of our and its obscure (post-Darwinian research notwithstanding...) veiled emergence and disappearance, making may find itself dragged backwards, going back on its (our) word(s) (as well as on all its other supposedly 'cultural' resources - images, gestures, habits and so on). The *duende* names this goading tormentor that effects the maker's seizure and withdrawal. And it is precisely out of the trajectories and destinies of this provoked struggle, this challenging extremity, that art's promise, its taut shaping fusion of sensation and language, may be engendered and released. But by his stress on the defining importance of cultural context, on what 'locally' is taken to be essential to vitality, to how one's embodied becoming is shaped, Lorca both complexifies, darkens, and makes specific the 'situation' (plight?) of inspiration. The challenge of this complexifying is exemplified in his comment on those performing arts where a maker's (composer's, writer's) gest relies on others' interpretive performance for its realisation. Whereas Harvey's discussion focussed exclusively on composers' inspiration, Lorca remarks the interpreter's and performer's crucial role, even noting that the latter may transform a composition or poem from not-art into art:

'Often the *duende* of the composer passes into the *duende* of the interpreter, and at other times, when a composer or poet is no such thing, the interpreter's *duende* - this is interesting - creates a new marvel that looks like, but is not, the primitive form.'¹²⁷

He cites Goethe and Paganini who 'made one hear deep melodies in vulgar trifles.'¹²⁸ In those arts constituted through performers' interpretation the latter defines the performance

¹²⁵ Op. cit., p. 53.

¹²⁶ The dark-beforehand, Lorca's *duende*, coursing darkly in the blood and elsewhere, does indeed point to what continues to ceaselessly form us as still pleistocenians, aside from memory and language yet interrupting and infiltrating both of them, felt but unbeknownst. Coming to terms with our rooted pleistocenian legacy is a project defining issue for a diverse range of makers-toward-art that I refer to in passing subsequently.

¹²⁷ Op. cit., p. 47.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

and sometimes it may find ‘something new and totally unprecedented that could give lifeblood and art to bodies devoid of expressiveness.’¹²⁹

Perhaps it is the pulsing strangeness of the ‘deep melody’ of this ‘lifeblood’ that has, in a very different cultural context, infused and enabled the constant re-vivification of the seemingly simple musical structure of the twelve-bar blues, an endlessly renewable form around which jazz still spirals.¹³⁰ From the resonantly diverse interpretations of the vocal-and-guitar country blues of America’s deep south, through the rending renderings of the women blues singers of the ‘twenties and ‘thirties, via the extraordinarily assured melodic inventiveness and rhythmic freedom of Louis Armstrong’s solo on ‘Potato Head Blues’ (1927), to the complex harmonic substitutions of John Coltrane’s late recordings and beyond, musicians’ recourse to the ‘blues’ marks a region for the exploration of musical feeling that is to do precisely with response to context (context as a local and brutal history). Musicians with vastly different interests and foci, ‘hearing’ something deep within the harmonic-temporal sequence of the ‘blues’ that draws them down across continents into a historical experience to which they are called to affiliate, become ‘muse-icians’ in their various performed responses. The *duende* is felt, rhythmised out, right through, right there, in the bone-blood-flesh-skin of the African-American experience. The feeling of being ‘black to the bone’, in the words of one such blues, is turned into a poignant and paradoxical question in a couplet from Fats Waller’s and Andy Razaf’s ‘Black and Blue’, where the words’ juxtaposition of the two colours points unequivocally down into the darkness of an unspeakable corporeal history:

‘What did I do
To be so black and blue.’

Of course it is the supposedly ‘free-play space’ of interpretation (always inevitably performed within strictly controlled conceptual and managerial limits) that simultaneously provides for the emergence of the institution of criticism within the machinery of representation. As itself a sub-component of the machine that constructs and maintains ‘aesthetic values’, criticism and analysis-as-critique (through its laying-bare) play crucial roles in the culture’s dynamic of ‘taste’ formation and the ‘placing’ of art. Whatever the combined effects of muse, angel, demon, *duende*, and makers’ own transformations, aesthetic values and taste-sustenance are ordered from sites of practice and interest almost completely separate from those of making. Indeed the establishment of an explicit and recognisable distance between critique and its objects partially defines its intention and identity. There is no possible overlap between the trajectory of performing and that of its institutional critique and placement. Museal and ‘duendeic’ calls to otherness are ‘about’ something else altogether than the setting up, mediation and control of ‘aesthetic value’ or the assertion of personal taste.

Performing is indelibly marked and differentiated by its thrall to the obscure darkness of an unspeakable sourcing whose take-it-or-leave-it offerings, once accepted and however transformed, set it off on its own, running for its life. It runs to get away from A and to head(-and-body) for B, whilst realising deep within itself (this is the know-how of its running) that it never will escape completely from A nor arrive at B. It knows that the running is all it is, all it has (though without ever possessing even this running, for the running is, rather, what possesses it) and that, for it, everything turns on how it runs on, on its performing. Its task is

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ For further discussion of this see the sub-section ‘Bluesing the Source’ in the last chapter.

to keep its running somehow in the proximity of the sourcing, to keep up with what might be on offer. Its know-how tells it that it is already in the midst of its sourcing, that its sourcing is all about it, that its sourcing is the everything that it can make out about its circumstances. And its only hope, by which it keeps its faith in art's open possibility, is that this sourcing, the circumstantial flows that keep it running on, will summon it into and offer it something from its not-yet. But, needless to say, such summoning, as the entirely unanticipatable, hedges performing around with the as yet ineffable. If and when an offer 'comes' it is this very ineffability that provokes performing to derive the specificity of its not-quite-a-language in response. Thus suspended between the strangeness of the call and the familiarity of its know-how, performing is tasked to confront the ensuing perplexities...

Aside from Work, Tasked to Perform About ... Unbecoming ... Surfacing...

If there is only the task and the task turns out to be, aside from all representing, not-work, then...

... if one is condemned to it, then that is why it is a task, both less than and more than work, neither a gift nor an offer but a demand that pushes and pulls one into itself, then...

...if the demand, seeming to come from all sides, from both inside and outside (not just from some 'inner necessity'), also summons performing to come out of itself, through a confusing and exposing of inside and outside, so that it is 'about' the inseparability of inside and outside, the unplaceable place where they abut, then...

...such a task could never be 'about', never surround or be surrounded by (never be under the sway of) production/productivity/structure/sign and all those already guilty terms that pull it into the orbit and under the control of those 'things' we gather as 'contextual' (culture in its unknowable entirety...). Rather it would have to be 'about' all those specific vagues that slip away through the gaps between those guilty terms...

>

'It doesn't seem to be about much.'

'Perhaps because there's not much of it about.'

'And I've had about as much as I can take of what there is.'

'Maybe the much you have taken has not been about the it for which you are searching. It could be hard to find, precisely because the not-much that it is is routinely passed over, allowed to drift away through the cracks, here where the rewards accrue only to much. And there's certainly all too much much here but I don't think it's what you're looking for.'

'It's what it's about that I'm after.'

'I'm afraid the only question we may be left with is not what it's about, for what it's about is only the not-much which is almost nothing. We are condemned forever to ask only what is about it.'

'Where what is about it is what hems it in, surrounds it?'

'There will always be an unbridgeable gap between it and its surroundings.'

'It's that gap that I want to be in...'

'...the gap that's about it.'

'It's this gap that I feel it's about too.'

'Trying to feel your way into it, you will fall away from what you're about and what's been about you.'

'So maybe this falling away from the not much of me that's still left is about the closest I'll get to it.'

'Where it is concerned there is no close and no far, only an about that is always falling away from it.'

'So there's not much I can do about it?'
 'Not-much. That's about it. All about it.'

>

The task is to respond to the summons of sourcing, all the while knowing that we can get no closer than the gap which is all about it and which is all about us, knowing that beyond the gap, which is our last (groundless) outpost, there is only the open. Performing is tasked with trying, patiently in its falling away from here, to open onto the open at that invisible no-point where gap and open abut, where inside and outside elide, coincide without ever joining up.

Tasked performing is unbecoming. Sensing that work will get it anywhere but the gap which is all about us, performing patiently unlearns work (work being driven by the impatience of an end always demanding an earlier and earlier arrival). It is what ill-becomes the I, the we, the you, the s(h)e, the they, all those 'ones' that, at first, want desperately to be in employment, put to good use. Getting to the threshold that holds the gap between inside and outside, visible and invisible, together and apart on the same lineless line, the ones that can only ever become just disappear in the lap and the lapping of patience.

If patience requires effort it is no longer the effort of work, which is forever committed to speeding things up to get to the end of work's thing as soon as possible; it is, rather, finding the energy to give up, becoming effortless in a world where becoming is steadfastly tied to effortful working: dissipation of the whoever that is always becoming - transportation by a strange kind of patience in which the endlessness of the metamorphosis of becoming is somehow held at bay.

If becoming is the unquestioned routine e-venting of the one (I, you), performing-as-task is a conduct-unbecoming in which the ductile self (stretched out, drawn out, led out into itself along its own singular lines) is transformed, collapsed, into amorphousness. If the summons of the task somehow issues from and wants to draw us towards somewhere like an origin (what and where it would be to be originally), then performing may be dependent upon a turning which turns away from becoming. Becoming can never get right up to sourcing because it is its lot to be the endless movement away from beginnings. Only the decline of becoming, a patient turning aside from the lines stretching out in front that pull one inexorably forward (the paths of becoming), could take us towards sourcing's nearness. Yet becoming is our condemnation and possibility. That is why it is only the not-we, the not-I, that can be conducted into unbecoming. That is why what the culture calls 'practice' (as the supposed 'other' of 'theory'), and which is offered here as 'performing' (as an atheoretical full-to-bursting thoughtfulness), is the utterly elsewhere, an absolute stranger, to what we routinely think of and call 'doing' and 'action'. For no-one practices: practice-as-performing may only be the not-much that comes about in the unbecoming, as effortless patience, of a some-one dying to art, a some-one who, having already passed out of its 'I' and its 'me', has to die away from the paths of becoming - what dies away is the movement of becoming. In its (moving) place is movement's lack, an absencing of movement in which place itself gives itself away.

Tasked to unbecome, the one, the self, has to give way to what it may be about sourcing that offers, opens out, points to, its first faltering ways; when the one gives way, or has way taken from it, what displaces its place is a generator (always 'there' but routinely passed over) that generates what is about the one and what the one is about. These 'abouts' are the sourcing that is always about us but never present. *Originally we are just about, but only just about about.* It is this just about that is truly all we are, ever were. It is what keeps on generating one in spite of

one-self, my plural I's ever-emerging in spite of myself. Being all about us and what we are all about, it is far too close for comfort.

Origination, sourcing, is not way back there, then, in some discrete but undiscoverable past time-place. It is the just about of the where and when in which we are now. Yet it is never exactly here where we are. It is what unbecoming (the turn away and fall from becoming without any beginning) turns towards. And in the course of unbecoming, this falling away from one's way that the task of searching for sourcing demands, what it is about us never will be grasped by any one in the way one might grasp something that is right here or an empirical truth. For, in dying to art, unbecoming generates the giving up of all the one's possessions, for one does not, cannot, possess what is originally always and only about us. The whoever that returns from unbecoming, that becomes one again, comes back not in possession of itself but as another, a mutant, transformed, however slightly, by having slipped out of itself and brushed up against what it was about and what was about it. Any thing that emerges from the loss of unbecoming will only be a marker of this transformation. The just about, where sourcing swarms (so closely over there), is all about withholding; it can only give nothing away, other's little nothings.

Perhaps this is all that can come out of unbecoming, its most uncomfortable home truth, its hardest lesson (that the one learns from the loss of its previous self). Any gest generated in performing's course, as conduct-unbecoming, will never redeem or show in its true light the one that one takes oneself to be becoming. The just about, out of which the one is sourced, timeless and placeless but going on just over there alongside, is beyond the one's reach. The remains of performing, remnants that are its only markers, are residues of a fall into unbecoming whose fate was (and always will be) a falling short of what it is about us that sources.

And yet, in spite of this perennial falling short, performing realises that its task and last chance is always to welcome the unbecoming. Unwelcome because it cannot take performing and the dissolving one right into what is just about it, the falling short nevertheless has to be made welcome *because it is the last and only chance that performing will get*. For performing needs to unmake itself well, and needs to welcome exactly that which is its ill-becoming: unbecoming, the fall out of becoming (becoming's euthanasia), welcomes this fall euphorically.

But if this welcome fall (of the no-longer-one seeking what it is about) can only reach the threshold of, brush up against, this sourcing about, without ever breaking right through into the open that endlessly sources it (and just it), it is left in the gap between the one that it has left behind and the swelling swarming emptiness of the open. Whatever it is that originally and ever again opens it to becoming, remains before it as nothing but surfaces off which it can only glance tangentially. What it sees, hears, feels, smells, tastes, all at once, is nothing but the outside of its very ownmost, the opening from which it is forever being cast out into becoming. In the end (at the limits of its unbecoming), it is left with nothing but the retreat of just what it is about; it remains on the near side of its own opening out, unable to come to terms with, let alone counter or move against and back through, the unforce which endlessly expels it into becoming.

And these surfaces...? Surface-words, -images, -reverberations, -tremblings, -contours, all without depth, the responses to which can only be marked, be made up into yet other surfaces to stand as memorials to the falling short of unbecoming.

If what we reach for and get to is always surfaces, seemingly supported and generated by whatever is their other side, their invisible unknowable 'behind', and if these surfaces, as in everyday vision (and technoscience), are in continuous recession from us as we reach out

towards them, then our sense of our position, our place (which we compulsively but routinely and unquestioningly fix in everyday life to provide for the minimum continuity of our becoming) is this relation of approaching and receding. Our 'given' place, what seems given to us as our place, is nothing but this relation of movement towards the surfaces before us (becoming) and the surfaces' inexorable recession from this movement.

Technoscience wants to seize and break through these surfaces, to end their recession and steal the secret of what lies behind them. But each tiny rent or split made by its glancing surface blows is immediately re-sealed, healed, leaving it with nothing but further surface matter. How we 'see' ourselves (where we place ourselves) is caught up with and endlessly re-constituted through this endless surface-splitting, these violent attempts to out-fold the forever hidden recesses. Our becoming is taken over by this attempted out-folding (and not least by the out-folding of our 'own' bodies) without our ever beginning to grasp the mystery of our 'own' sourcing; what this forced out-folding leaves us with are ever more complexly bloated surfaces that, with increasing effectiveness, push the mystery further and further away from us, so much so, perhaps, that we no longer acknowledge what the surface withholds from us.

Excavation: for technoscience - a hollowing-out, out-folding and insanely desired re-presentation of the real which it believes lies behind every surface – and all this solely for the purpose of application, of use.

'Excavation': for de Kooning - an insane surface-offering: a very thin bas-relief (lightly encrusted canvas) showing how that which can never be released from its behind always leaves its tell-tale effects through its contouring and colouring of and at the surface – and all this solely for nothing.

As we, gathered (huddled) together under and within technoscience, try to turn the world inside out, performing-toward-art tries to force itself to take an extremely concentrated 'look' at our multiplying surfaces, but a look with a difference, a look from somewhere completely different. Taking all its clues of the 'invisible behind' (whatever is at the back of us and things) entirely from what is right 'there' at the surface, art wants to collude with surface(s) in order to cajole the behind into leaving something of itself at the surface. It is, perhaps, some kind of project of reconciliation, a coming together, just for an instant, of the infinite depth of all that is behind us (while flowing all about us without cease) with the furious movements constituting all surfaces.

Seeking to embed itself in and absorb everything the surface offers, art wants to bring together, perhaps to merge, to persuade them to exchange places, the infinite depth of our own inner spacings and the measureless recession forming the surfaces which, lying all about us, appear (groundlessly) to ground us. Perhaps too, through the gests that emerge from these excavations of the surface's trembling contours, it wants to suggest that this is what we are doing continuously, if haltingly, vaguely and without reflection, in our everyday life: the constitution of 'ordinariness' as nothing but this extraordinary holding-together, in an irresolvable tension (always repressed through fear of the consequences of revelation), of the two absolutely distant and alien 'inners' - what keeps us going in and as the surface continuity of daily life. Self-placing in everyday life - how we give ourselves way and away - has to be taken-for-granted so that the ordinary (the continuities of becoming) can just about go on its way.

Performing worries away at this non-point (the pointlessness of becoming) - the conjunction as nothing but surface (what manifests itself to us) of two measureless depths. This is 'where' (yes, but where exactly? Isn't this 'exactly' exactly what each gest tries to bring to its surface?) our

way is both given to and made by us through the merging and complementing of the visible and the invisible. And, in worrying away so worklessly at this disjunctive juncture, performing tries to get it to give something of itself away to and for us, to show us just how extraordinary this coincidence is. It tries to show us, each time 'just this once', how this double withholding is also nothing but the way we and things are brought and held together as and in the greatest fragility.

The surfaces (flat, contoured, coloured, solid, textual, aural, temporal, bodied, tempered, scented) that art offers us celebrate its recognition and reconstitution as the possibility of what it might be for this meeting, this suffusing coming together, to 'take place' as nothing but surface. When art's gests are just about this coincidence we can glimpse, as they pass before and through us, the way (each time just this way) our projection of ourselves into world, and our incorporation of world into ourselves, is absolutely dependent upon, is finally nothing but, withholding (a withholding too in which we participate without ever quite being able to realise its consequences). Whatever 'we' are is dependent upon something being withheld from us, something that cannot be given away, yet which is the giving of way, is what gives us way, and, eventually, the possibility of place, of whatever we stake out as 'our' place.

Taking this merging as its starting (and returning) point (a 'point' that is only the spreading out of a surface), performing tries to manifest the withholding that sustains it as its and our mystery. Yet in spite of dealing only in and with matters, what matters to and for it, matters that it turns into its gests, art is never empirical but always and only mystical. By being other to the empirical (and thus to technoscience), art's gests suggest that all attempts at surface-splitting and unfolding condemn themselves to be nothing but further concealings, for what they appear to fold back and drag out from behind the surfaces they attack is only the unstoppable and immediate self-suturing of the surface itself. What is folded back recovers seamlessly the withholding that gives way.

In the face of the routine charging-onwards to out-fold everything that comprises our daily life under technoscience, art's task somehow has to take on and include the ways it too is the object of such terrorist unfolding. It cannot pursue what it is about without confronting and somehow trying to turn to its own (minuscule...) advantage its incorporation by the surrounding life-project. Performing can no longer, if it ever could, be divorced from contest-responsive tactics because these become essential to self-protection. And yet self-protection appears utterly paradoxical for a performance the 'point' of whose emergent gests is to be nothing but surfaces with nothing to hide, surfaces whose interest and value to potential respondents is supposed to lie in the authenticity of their claim to be nothing other than what they appear as - just surfaces celebrating surfacing.

Facing endless incorporation, then, art's surfacing gests have to try ceaselessly to manifest an otherness to those activities constituting the worlds of work; their surfaces have to be the undermining of work as we know it and as it routinely defines us. Far from the stability, the routinisation, of work's organisation, art's task is to be constantly on the move, dodging about, throwing together, in the weirdest combinations, gut-feeling and high tactics in ways that will make it difficult (and this difficulty is always only short-term given the appropriating powers of work) for work-organisations to enfold its things. Yet this extreme motility, the flashing seemingly random unpredictability of its volatility, has to combine with a stillness that precisely offers itself as the other of work's ever-faster on-rushing. Art has still to be the fastest while holding fast to a complete standstill.

In two or more places at once, and hence nowhere, no place with which we are familiar, performing tasks itself with showing what it might be like to 'live' in the gaps between the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, the touchable and the untouchable. Its surfaces try to 'say' that this displacement, this gap where it tries to make out what it is all about, is where we 'are' in any and every case - always other than what and how we have taken ourselves to be. This pointless gap is where, for art, the thickness of things and ourselves (how things and ourselves are thick as thieves - in it all together) is all too apparent. This is where we and things are swallowed up together precisely as thickness, even though, for everyday life, thickness is always something to be opened out, stretched, slivered, and, with the overarching vision and help of technoscience, made into the very thin, made even thinner, the thinnest - the technoanorexophilia of the hypo-micro-nano-chip. It is this thickness that art tasks itself to make apparent. Fortunately, what it makes apparent to and for itself is always just beyond us.

>

'It's all too apparent.'

'Yes, everything that surrounds us.'

'We're surrounded. There's no escape.'

'They're just surfaces though.'

'It's that just that I don't trust.'

'They've never let us down yet.'

'Only perhaps because we've never truly trusted them with our full weight.'

'They'll never give way.'

'No, way is not in their gift.'

'They give nothing away.'

'They offer nothing but their appearance and its disappearance.'

'That's all too apparent.'

'Yet after all these years we still don't know how to respond to the offer.'

'It seems that we haven't yet learned to take them at face-value.'

'We don't even recognise them as faces.'

'If we were to see them facing us we might even treat them as possible friends.'

'Friends perhaps who are pleading with us.'

'To be left alone?'

'Perhaps. But possibly to join with us.'

'We couldn't face that at present.'

'You're right. We're too wrapped up in ourselves just now.'

'Constantly shielding ourselves from imagined threats from what surrounds us.'

'More than that. It's always been our way to get the first blow in.'

'Constant attack as the only form of self-protection.'

'Treating the surfaces we attack as if they were merely misleading masks hiding all too cunning foes.'

'Tearing off the masks in order to reveal the darkness of their supposed threat.'

'Then, in the cold light we throw on them, we systematically work at their destruction.'

'Even though there are always a myriad replacements.'

'This endless renewal only serves to reinforce our sense of threat and our continuing commitment to violent struggle.'

'We seem to have trapped ourselves in this circle with no way of reversing or leaping out of it.'

'Perhaps that's because not only can we not face up to others and what surrounds us as precisely faces, even less can we face up to ourselves.'

'We cannot stand our own appearance.'

'Nor can we stomach how we think we appear to others.'

'And thus, wanting always to be other than we appear to be to ourselves, our 'life' is an endless struggle to violently transform ourselves into something other.'

'We believe absolutely that we lack something essential to our possible well-being, yet we have no idea what this other thing might be.'

'I'm afraid it will always turn out to be something very different to what we had vaguely hoped.'

'Whatever the appearance of this difference we seem to be condemned to ruining it.'

'It's a sad fact that we are past-masters at the ruination of everything that appears.'

'Including ourselves.'

'If only we could include ourselves with others as just what appears, as nothing but a continuous mutual surfacing.'

'By all means let us hold to this hope, but I fear it will not surface for the time being.'

>

Where nothing is given away by the thickness of us and things, where the surfaces are apparently nothing more nor less than blank walls, at such points that which art has tasked itself to do seems to come to an end, yet the performing-toward-art may not even have found a way to begin. The tasks cannot set up, call forth, the summons, they can only prepare a possible way, enable perhaps a certain responsiveness to come forth from the lying in wait that comprises so much of the tasks of performing. Being-summoned is nothing but the other to the task, yet the task includes the wait for the call.

When the thickness of things is a blank what option has the thoughtful pregnant gaze got other than to shut down, to turn itself off and away? Faced with the little nothings that seem to hide forever, to close the open of forever off to us, the waiting as expectant hope has to be shrugged off and to give way to nothing but these little nothings. They are all we are left with and they throw back at us only our own seeing-thinking. Somehow, beyond the task, performing has to learn to wait blankly, without expectation, yet just about sustained by the remnants of a fading hope, supported by the faint light of a 'perhaps'. As the extremity of unpredictability, the sharp intake of breath (inspiration's interruption of the deadpan rhythm of just breathing) breaks the ordinary's continuity, jolting the breather out of the givenness of orderly flow into the disturbance of surprise - a turbulence that mixes things up. Every summons seems to have a span, to take some time, yet it never does take place because it takes over in no time at all, coming from an originless no-where - absolute speed. It cannot be measured by the length, however brief, of the sharp intake of breath.

In upsetting the pulmonary rhythm and being excessive to breathing-in, the call's exhilaration knocks breathing off its taken-for-granted path, turns it aside momentarily. Not only is it the reversal of exhalation (which already bears within itself the expiry of dying and entropy), it is the turning 'point' that is all pointing, way-pointing. Up to our very last breath every expiration is an 'in order to', a preparation and enabling for inspiring, yet we never know whether the next breath is going to be more than just breathing-in, more than the maintenance of our essential beating rhythms. But the sharp intake of breath of inspiration, the sudden flash in which breath and a strange illumination come together, all at once, throws us out of our time, off the smoothness of our familiar paths. Dazzled and momentarily off course we are cut off from the givens of our world. At the same time this strange flash blinds us to its source.

Sourceless illumination shines on the place where we took the visible for granted, but lights it up as other, as no longer ordinary, as transformed into the extraordinary, seen in and as its now

recognisably essential strangeness - perfect impurity. We are not enlightened by this illumination (no, enlightenment is infinitely distant), but it does show us how we are held in, folded within, dependent upon, our own pulsing flashing darkness - the way we are always in the dark. We duendians (surely there is no such word, yet here it is) are the tendency to become the darkest.

Of course none of this happens very often. Mostly the days and nights are reasonably fine, a few light showers here and there with some fog patches early and late but clearing away by mid-morning; nights are mildish, everything holding up at the seasonal normal. Breathing conditions for just getting on with our work remain standard. Of course something can come at any moment that interrupts this 'getting on with'. In the unlikely event that...

Unlikely

There is an extreme point, Blanchot suggests, where superabundance and lack (inspiration and its lack) are confounded, where inspiration becomes the aridity of the absence of power.¹³¹ Nocturnal, marvellous, but desperate because it is both the unquestionable and the impossible (the absence of all potential/possibility), this moving point-state seems to be what, precisely because it is the impossible, makes art possible.

But could it be just a point? Are we not, here, under the sway of, confounded by, the wave that leaves all points pointless and indeterminable, unplaceable - the echoing of an elsewhere that is not the taking of a place, the making of a point, but its endless abrupting? As the outside of place-as-ground and time-as-presence, this waving pointless point is behind the law, all about the law, but before all determination. Confounding superabundance and aridity, origin and end, power and weakness, it will have none of them. All it can do is pass - it is the 'it' that passes through, a passage of the outside through and as the most intimate of the inside, while remaining all the time over there, so near but way beyond any reach of ours. It 'is' (although this 'is' is already a positive that 'it' absolutely escapes) the most un-likely - it lacks all resemblance.

What might it be to be 'likely'? Perhaps the likely is the anticipated familiar, whose repeated coming to pass confirms, once again, our expectations, expectations built upon and constantly reinforced by our boundless ability to find likeness, to compare like with like, to recognise, classify and memorise resemblances. The sustenance of the ordinary, the mighty achievement of a seemingly unbreakable continuity of 'sense making', is heavily if not absolutely dependent upon the recognising and constituting of likeness in the appearing together, seemingly alongside each other, of ourselves and world. In the 'same' process (the working out of recognition) all distinguishing and differentiation, constituting differences as the 'not like', work through the presence or absence of 'like'.

To avoid the likely, to 'let' it pass by, is the aimless aim of performing's task. But 'one' (the performing subject) by definition cannot know when or if the unlikely (let alone the most unlikely) may come to pass - one may miss its passing precisely because of its unrecognisability. Not being a recognisable event it cannot be contained by or as what we recognise as an event that comes to pass, to take its place as just this event. The unlikely is the eventless event, the eventing of the uneventful, where nothing comes forth, passes, or takes place. If it is an outcome it is the outcoming of nothing (we recognise or 'know'), the outside of what we take an event to be. Passing eventing by, it leaves us standing, and, maybe, just, wondering. Unrecognisable, because not garbed in anything we associate with the appearance of things, we can only recover,

¹³¹ M. Blanchot, *op. cit.*, p.182.

re-member, a hoped-for little something of its passing-through as just the extremely unlikely. And our recovery is immediately condemned to fall back upon the only means it is familiar with in its reconstitution of this passing through - resemblance, likeness: the gathering in of the unlikely to the likely.

The becoming of the unlikely is not 'like' any becoming with which we are familiar and which we routinely place our confidence and ourselves within. To be drawn into the play of what was never likely, to get to the point (oscillating and pointless) where the unrecognisable can be brought back (but only in some now barely recognisable, almost likely, as yet almost formless form), requires a meekly brazen confidence given to or earned by very few of us. And this unlikely recovery, which we can only return with as now a 'thing', will indeed still have many of the marks of its own specific insanity - insane because it has nothing to do with the likely, the expected, the minded; it confounds what we bring to it by appearing from 'nowhere' (groundless) and being without connection, relation, to that which has brought us to it.

We do not just come across, stumble upon, or find the becoming of the unlikely, rather it diverts us, turns us aside, throws us off course. The 'we' remains back there on its way, while the 'us', becoming the unlikely's plaything, is cast off and split up into several. Unwound, drawn out and turned back into the play of what was never likely, the one of the subject (the 'we', the 'I') loses all the reassurances of what it brought to, and what brought it to, the unplaceable thing. For what carried it along, seemingly without any trouble or disturbance, was the security of its own taken-for-granted preferences - its 'taste', the utter ordinariness of taste. The 'what-I-prefer' of taste, the apparent unequivocalness of 'what I like', is not to be denied - it seems to be simply 'there', defining my becoming, already at hand. And it constantly confirms itself 'in action' as my tastes are reinforced through repetition; the 'like' of 'likely' that is the 'like' of simile (doing the endless anticipatory work of comparison to find the more-or-less-same) is also the 'like' of the little pleasures sought out by 'taste' (little because they are never extreme or at the edge) to provide the warming comforts of reassurance. Little pleasures help to keep us at ease, undisturbed. 'Like' here performs moderation (the absence of thrownness or ecstasy) and is characterised by a certain 'mereness' (it is frequently modified by 'quite', and sometimes taken further away from itself by 'very much', which begins to approach the limits of 'like'). Taste's region is the ordinary; it is where one is sustained by a clearly bounded 'there' without aspiration for any other(ness). Clinging to an assumed sustainable centre, taste defers for ever, and seeks to protect itself from exposure to, any extreme, anything threatening its own decorum, the 'good' that marks it out as, after all, just 'good taste'.

But the summons, as the most unlikely, expels us from taste. And, because taste is so strong in its self-conviction and constant self-reinforcement (without exception we all unavoidably suffer from it), an immense wrench is required to effect our expulsion. Yet the force required to bring off this wrench-out projects us towards a sublime weakness. The illumining catastrophic inhaling simultaneously blows control away, forcing out all those things maintaining taste and giving it the whip hand over our ordinary becoming. Divested of taste, something of the other, of the outside, may just fill us, however briefly.

In some way then the 'whole' of performing, its seeming-work, its not-work, is dedicated to the (faint) possibility and hope that it may be interrupted from its tasteful routines by the most unlikely of callings. And, being the epitome of the unanticipatable, performing has to recognise in its secret heart (somewhere on the outer surface of taste) that what is thought of as inspiration is quite beyond it. Performing necessarily condemns itself to a half-life of vain hope and quiet desperation. At the risk of nothing other happening, it busies itself with all the little nothings

that, from the outside (from the view of the surrounding culture), may have all the appearances of work, yet whose sole point is to provide for work's utter inconsequentiality.

Performing: a turning back and about (which is more and less than a reflexive thinking) that requires nothing of one but everything of the other, of what one lacks forever - a turning of one into the uncountable of the other, a turning that tries to turn aside from the hemming region of taste, but is unable to return to the sourcing that sustains it and from which it believes it has departed.

Sourcing: the vanishing enabler - a non-presence allowing performing to get under way, but becoming ever more elusive with each of the latter's twists and turns. Withdrawing and receding in the face of performing's forward movement (for performing is always already on the way, under way, without a beginning) sourcing turns out to be pure recession, a falling back to where and what it only ever is - beginning-out-of-reach. It completely surrounds performing.

Sensing that sourcing is all about it (both behind and up ahead), performing can only turn and turn about itself in the hope of catching a glimpse of the outside of its own beginnings. It is caught up in the withdrawal of what it is all about, what gave way to it, what allowed it to make its (first and last) mark. As it holds to this withdrawal, performing becomes withdrawn, withdraws itself from any place where it might be taken for something securely in a place and time. Receding from taste it becomes tasteless, that which taste has consigned to the back-ground, the dark groundlessness undermining all preference schedules.

In its turn back into itself all it can ever 'find' is its own reserve, that it can never be 'up front', 'out there'; it discovers itself as only in reserve. Its becoming-unlikely thus seems to be the reserve, the holding back of becoming itself. It is as if performing and its gestures could not yet quite become: they drift in the just-before, as the not-yet, of becoming. So we, who would be their recipients and respondents, however much we look (forward) to or desire them, never quite get them. They remain about us but not with us. Unable to become, they deprive us of themselves; this is their way of unbecoming. They remain in their infinitive, quite beyond our quotidian tenses. Trying to reach out beyond ourselves we are left, forlorn, falling always just short of art. From their just-before, right over there, so close but way beyond us, in their very holding back they offer us this glimpse of ourselves as lack. They show us (by default, in their reserve) that we are the without of art.

Or rather, we ('our' institutions) take them over without ever getting them. We may believe we have them firmly in hand (collected, archived, displayed, published, annotated, fixed, critiqued, valued...), but they remain elsewhere, in their own reservation, silent and still, lawless's unto themselves, and, as offerings alone, quite unable to give themselves away: the unlimited - out of bounds to the ordinary. In effect, the take-over, the appropriation of the body that deposits it in culture's coffin, pushes them even further away because it generates and lives off the illusion that the place in which they have ended up is their truth, their only possible place, their true destiny. It manifests the power of the ordinary (the taken-for-granted meaning-giving practices of daily life) to place any thing on and in its own terms, to remain untouched and untroubled by otherness. It is this appropriation that constitutes, 'is', the 'threat' that forms performing; the threat enters it and its gestures, informing the ways they seek to insulate themselves from the take-over. By definition, the take-over attempts to abolish any sense of reserve or withholding, because what it needs to do is to show, and in so doing to continually convince itself, its sponsors and its audiences, about its own inordinate powers to place everything (in the light of secured 'meaning'). No reserve is recognised - its own overwhelming need is to fold-out every covering

that withholds. In the face of this non-recognition, this willed dismissal, of the withdrawal, the reserve, that holds art back from culture, art can only retreat further into its own unlikeliness - already less-than-becoming it becomes increasingly less likely.

If the words (these) that try to respond to art's unbecoming seem to be weighed down with 'abstractions', with the seemingly (but necessarily) vague, with processes that cannot be fixed by means of the techno-info-discourse of daily life, this is only because these 'vagues', these passings-through of an unfixable current, are the very non-stuff of art, its performings and its gests. For art, the vagues become its most concrete 'phenomena' - phenomena subject to no known or knowable phenomenology, because as we, as art, approach them they show (by withholding) what they 'are' not (yet). And they show this precisely in all their driven imprecision: disappearance, absence, lack, withholding. Art's absolutely concrete gests and particulars (it 'exists' (always a less-than-existence) only in these particulars) are nothing if not the absencing of themselves as just things (things that can be laid bare under the scrutiny, the gaze, that attempts to pierce all shells, of knowledge-work).

Discourses working for knowledge (and it is almost impossible for routinised discourses, invariably attached to work-settings, to escape this constraint now) are not looking for, cannot 'hear' (and thus will not come across), the ever-so faintly resounding gap between the absolutely reserved site beyond our limits (the other to which art seeks to withdraw us), and the first rudimentary setting up of limits (knowledge's earthworks - the primitive ramparts thrown up against disappearance, lack, uncertainty, vagueness). We use the work of empirical knowledge-production to ward off all threats to the 'grounds' of our security, to the place where we want, need, to make as much as we possibly can familiar. And we do this because we like what is like. We want to secure our 'present' (our becoming-present) as a movement that is guided by an informed anticipation of what will come to pass, of what we will be passing through and what will be passing through us. The goal of this anticipation is the minimising, if not the elimination, of risk from things, others, and ourselves.

If art is the engagement of withdrawal from, the movement out of, the secure (what we think we know, what we feel most comfortable, at home, in), then it is a risking - it takes on risks as its unspeakable reason, its 'motivation' (although the term 'motive' is too weak (too loaded with the 'psychological') to touch the beyond-ontological qualities of the movement). Risk is both what surrounds it and, as such, what it is taking on in its foray into what it is about and what is all about it. The would-be artist risks returning from the withdrawal (the turn into its own withheldness) with nothing that might make a difference to what we take for granted about our relation to world and others. A gest brought back from just beyond the brink risks an enforced self-acknowledgment (the honesty to accept its own failure) that its particulars are nothing but 'meaning', all too meaning-full. It risks, each time, being so amenable to meaning, so absorbable, that it is unable to maintain any opening onto lack, any way of getting to the beyond, or the before, of what we take ourselves to know. It risks coming back full-up but empty-handed, without the lack it needs to become unlikely: infinitely fillable (by the surrounding appropriating filling-machines), and often so full of little positive nothings that the way out it had hoped to leave as the residue of its search is choked off, squeezed out. The risk is that of presenting a plenitude of things (instead of their disappearance, their insufficiency, their dependence on otherness), and thus of losing the thread of its 'own' (while owning nothing) unbecoming.

And appropriation, with its politics of representation (representing art's gests to us as if they were ours, yet surrounding them with techno-meanings that cannot be 'ours') changes the terms of risk which we might face as potential respondents to the offerings of would-be performers.

Our risks are minimised by the ways the gests and we ourselves are cocooned together, penned in the same cage of others' placing fixing interpretations. The gests' risk might just be kept alive in the face of such fixings, but even then only in conditions of a kind of security that we did not seek but which is the first legacy of appropriation. Given that we can only have access to the things on institutional terms, we have to begin our relations with them against this backdrop: *the whole point of institutional representation is to make our access to its offerings risk-free.*

For the most part we do not cross the thresholds of representation (gallery, published book, concert hall, theatre...) in fear and trembling, caught within the awe of anticipated self-loss, but in order to 'have a nice day, a good time', to return and pay again in affirmation of the conserving and the positioning done on our behalf. Institutions have to become comfort zones to ensure their own long-term survival.

The real risk now would be generated by trying to invert, scatter, dissolve, the values of the professional-technical comfort zones: to try to approach the gests as if they had never been represented, *as if they offered mute challenges directly to oneself rather than, first of all, to institutions.* In this way one would risk the isolation contingent upon exclusion from the institutional 'community' - the 'becoming-alone' that we might suppose each gest, in its hoped-for difference, would want to provoke from each of its respondents.

Could we approach art's gests as if they were missing persons, completely enclosed (by institutional frames), but lost to us, gone missing, outside all patrilineage? What would we be risking in this withdrawal from the networks of (artificial) community and meaning which encase performing and its gests? Could we learn to see, to read, them again (and again) one by one, one at a time, in a continuous reinvention of their difference, their specificity? Could we risk losing something of ourselves to something in them that had been tampered with and obscured throughout the period of their appropriation? Could we risk suspending, could we bear the loss of, the institutional histories that might indeed have framed our potential affection for the gests from the beginning (our beginning)?

Unreasonable questions, impossible risks: neither we nor the gests could survive attempts to enact them. Yet this half-(or-less-)life of non-survival may be their and our only chance now of avoiding the ways their unbecoming unlikeliness has been converted into the steadiness of institutional becoming. And even this 'becoming' is breath-dependent! We may be able to lay 'inspiration' aside but the 'something' that 'happens' in making's course, the gest's materialising emergence, still occurs through the maker's rhythmised breathing. Syncopating, interruptive, the essential something-other breaks through on its own terms laying waste to knowledge and work. Note the imperative in Gerhard Richter's words:

'I am more and more aware of the importance of the unconscious process that *has to take place* while one is painting – as if something were working away in secret. You can almost just stand by and wait until something comes. It has been called 'inspiration' or 'an idea from heaven' – but it's far more down-to-earth and far more complicated than that.'¹³²

¹³² Gerhard Richter, op. cit., pp. 195-6, (my italics added).

